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"Go In And Possess The Land"

by

Olive Bullis



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FOREWORD

The effort has been made to record in these pages, as many names of early homesteaders and of their reminiscences as possible. Thanks are due the following for their aid in furnishing material and information for the record:

Mrs. Charles Jordan; Mrs. Eliza Bunker and her brother, John W. Hobson; Arthur Graeff; Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Dunn; Mrs. Fred Bohman and her son, Edwin; Joe Ryschon; Mrs. Maude Ward; Mrs. Gladys McPherson; Mrs. Edith Lurz; Miss Olive VanMetre; Mrs. Leola Granger; Mrs. Earl Ladd; Otis D. Hahn, who remarked,

"You waited too long to begin. The Old Timers are about all gone." It was true, and, of those who were here when the work was begun, several have already passed on.

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The loan of papers by Mary Bryant, George Sanner and J. D. Novak, and letters written by Mrs. Henry Jackson, Mrs. Julia Miller, Helen Bullis Scott, W. R. Brown and Joe Novak -- now deceased -- was appreciated. Mrs. C. A. Broad permitted the use of her song, "Valentine", and Mrs. John Melton lent her volume of WESTERN NEBRASKA, HISTORY AND REMINISCENCE.

Other sources of information were: Charles S. Reece's EARLY HISTORY OF CHERRY COUNTY; a paper by Catherine Donoher, on file in the Historical Museum at Lincoln; John G. Neihardt's BLACK ELK SPEAKS: also various South Dakota and Nebraska histories.

Some names will be unavoidably omitted, and reminiscences are barely touched upon, as many even of the younger generation are gone or have moved to localities unknown to us who remain.

Thanks are also due Editor Ray Dover and staff of the Valentine News Paper, for their kindness and patience in the preparation of this book.



GO IN AND POSSESS THE LAND
By Olive Bullis

17

They had wandered in the desert
More than forty weary years,
But the heart-aches were forgotten,
And new hope dispelled their fears --

As they looked across the Jordan,
Waiting there, a trusting band,
For Jehovah's voice had bidden,
"Go in and possess the land."

Ages later, men of courage
Answered to the thrilling strain,
And the prairie-schooners jolted
On their journey 'cross the plain.

Unaware what lay before them,
Trusting Him Whose voice had called;
What explorers termed a desert
They faced calmly, unappalled.

They advanced to meet the challenge
By impelling, sure command,
For the Still Small Voice had spoken,
"Go in and possess the land."

I

FORT NIOBRARA

Congress had passed the Homestead Act in 1862. But it was not until after the close of the Civil War, (about 1878) that settlement got under way in Cherry County, and the early '80's on the North Table -- a rectangular

tract about seven by twelve miles in extent, lying between Minnehadzuza Creek -- just north of Valentine -- and the Dakota-Nebraska border. It is with this region that our story is concerned.

A paper on file in the Historic Museum of Nebraska University at Lincoln, written by Catherine Doncher, furnished this information in part:

The Brule Sioux, under Chief Spotted Tail, had been settled on a tract of land in South Dakota, ten years previously, by Government Treaty, and the Spotted Tail Agency -- later called Rosebud Agency -- promptly built.

But after the discovery of gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota, not even the efforts of the military could check the flow of white fortune seekers into that part of the Indian Territory. Understandably, the Indians grew restless and antagonistic over the invasion; also understandable was the anxiety of the settlers living along or near the boundary of the reservation.

General Crook -- Commander of the Department of the Platte -- recommended establishment of a post on the Niobrara River in Northern Nebraska about midway between the agency and Camp Sheridan. His advice was acted upon, and Fort Niobrara was established on April 22, 1880, with Major John J. Upham, 5th U. S. Cavalry, in charge. His command consisted of Company B, 9th U. S. Infantry, and Troops B, D, and F, 5th U. S. Cavalry.

The new post followed the usual pattern of frontier posts, with parade grounds surrounded by the buildings -- in this instance, adobe buildings at first, later replaced by frame. Only one of these original buildings remains (1962), the old supply depot at the north end of the grounds, is now used as a horse barn.

The most important service rendered by the military post was to provide a refuge in event of attack and this service it performed nobly. Another purpose, however, was to control, as far as possible, the activities of horse-thieves, rustlers and the general outlawry of the frontier.



Old Fort Niobrara. By permission of Fort Superintendent

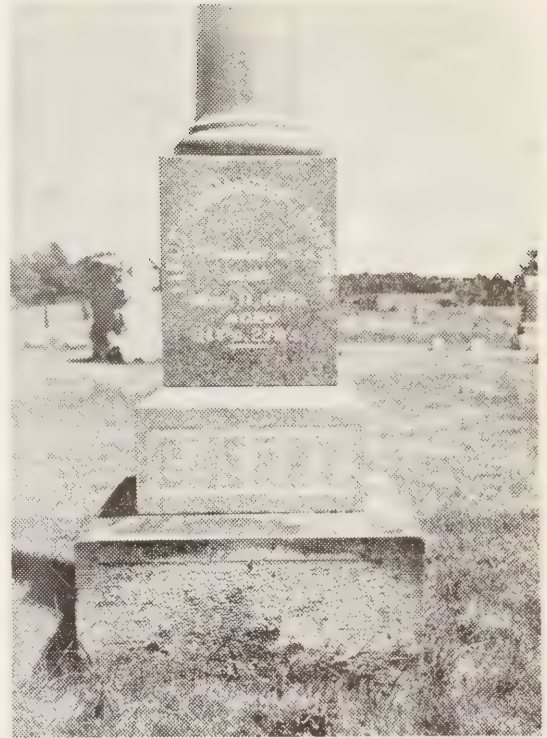
Incidentally, it constituted a market for all kinds of farm produce and wild game brought in by the homesteaders, while their wives did the soldiers' laundry, thus providing extra income that was sorely needed in most instances.

During the occupation of Fort Niobrara, the Indians gave no serious trouble, though many were the threats and rumors of uprisings and pending attacks. At such times, the horses of the troops were kept saddled day and night in readiness for instant action.

Bitter cold and severe storms made life difficult at the Fort, located as it was, at the top of a cliff above the river, where it received the full impact of every wind that blew, and Nebraska is famous for its strong winds and violent storms.

Time often hung heavy for the soldiers, and to relieve the monotony, a hall with dancing floor, stage and chapel, was built. A twenty or more piece string orchestra was organized, and theatricals and musicales were frequently presented by fort personnel. To these activities, the settlers drove and rode from miles around, cheerfully paying the small admission charged to provide funds for scenery and costumes.

A tragedy of the time occurred when Lieutenant Samuel A. Cherry of the 5th U. S. Cavalry, was shot and killed while on detail to pursue renegades. The fatal shooting occurred on the shore of Alkali (White) Lake in Southern South Dakota on May 11, 1881. His body rested in the cemetery at the fort until the following year, when his father and his fiancée, Miss Virginia White, came to take him back to La Grange, Indiana, his old home, for burial. It was for this young hero that Cherry County was named.



(Permission of Mrs. McCormick)

Other famous names connected with the Fort on the Niobrara were: Lieutenant John J. Pershing, 1891 -- following the Battle of Wounded Knee; Lieutenant John W. Stotzenberg -- later Colonel of 1st Nebraska Regiment in the Spanish-American War. Still later, he was killed in action in the Phillipine Campaign. General Nelson A. Miles, for whom Miles City, Montana, was named, had charge of the National Guard of Nebraska, along the Dakota, also followed the Wounded Knee Battle.

The "Last Garrison of Headquarters Band -- 1st and 3rd Battalions, 25th U. S. Infantry under Commander Ralph W. Hoyt, left the Fort on July 23, 1906. Detachment 3rd Battalion of 25th Infantry under Commander Robert P. Harbold, occupied until October 22, 1906, when

romantic, historic Fort Niobrara was finally officially abandoned and the era passed into history.

It was retained as a remount station until 1911, when the Fort and the government land that surrounded it, became a National Game Reserve and Early Day Museum. Herds of buffalo, deer, elk, antelope and many small antelope and birds now find refuge here. Not to be overlooked is one of the few remaining herds of Longhorn Cattle which also regards Old Fort Niobrara as home.

Chapter II

The Coming of the Railroad and Early Valentine

Neligh -- approximately two hundred miles east of present Valentine, was, at that time, the western terminal of the railroad. Supplies were brought from this point to Fort Niobrara by "Jewett's Bull Train", as well as by several smaller freighting outfits. The Bull Train consisted of from ten to twenty ox teams of twelve yoke each, pulling heavy freight wagons and trailers.



Freight wagons fording Niobrara River 1886



Arrival of freight wagons at the Fort (Used by permission)

Several large herds of Texas cattle had also been driven up the Niobrara (Indian word for Running Water), to fill government contract to furnish beef to the Indians. These cattle were frequently so thin after the long drive, that they were held for some time, grazing on the reservation before issue to the Indians.



Issue of cattle to Rosebud Indians

Construction of the railroad westward from Neligh began in 1880, along the Elkhorn Valley Route, largely through unorganized Sioux Territory that extended from Holt County to the Wyoming Border.

By autumn of 1881, track laying had been completed as far west as Long Pine, and immediately Big Cut -- two part railroad camp -- sprang up about four miles of Valentine, on the east side of the river. Big Cut, aside from being composed of canvas buildings, was the usual frontier town, and was made up of various eating shacks, numerous saloons, a Walter O'Malley Company Store and the dwellings of the workers and their families. The two parts lay on the two sides of the hill, and each was named or designated by the name of the superintendent in charge of that particular crew, -- Broom's Camp on the north and Brown's Camp on the south side. A young adventurer was hired to conduct a five month school for the children of the workers.

Both Protestant services and Mass were held at the fort and at the camp by the Post Chaplain and Father John P. Smith respectively.

At the election of 1882 -- the first to be held in Cherry County -- the three hundred or more votes by the population of Big Cut were the deciding factor in re-electing E. K. Valentine to Congress, and the city that also saw its beginning that fall, chose to be called by the Honorable E. K's name. This first election was held in the Deer Park Hotel, situated across the river from Fort Niobrara. The site is now graced by a historical marker.

Settlement and development progressed rapidly from this time on. The track was laid and the first train arrived in Valentine about the first of April, 1883. A few days later, Governor James W. Dawes authorized the organization of Cherry County. Editors Santee and Hill published the first news-paper, The Valentine Reporter. The Reverend H. Herbert conducted the first church service in the unfinished dining room of the

Valentine House and organized Sunday School the autumn following. Those of Catholic Denomination had as Spiritual Leaders, Fathers Francis Craft and J. A. Bushman, who were missionaries at Pine Ridge and Rosebud Agencies.

At the time of incorporation, Trustees Al Sparks, C. H. Cornell, John Little, Pete Donoher and W. Warner were appointed by the Commissioners.

Valentine was, for some years, a typical western cow town, the center of the range country, and the cattle industry was then as now, a controlling factor in its existence and development.

Evidences of the reasons for the reputation are found in a few of the reminiscences of several of whom we shall hear more later on in this narrative.

Mrs. Julia (Novak) Miller, now of Muscatine, Iowa, reports that her first recollection of Valentine was the unusual and startling phenomenon of a bawling, pawing buffalo, tied to a post! The animal had been captured by Jake Stetter, who, after turning it into his pasture, was obliged to shoot it in self defense when it charged him.

J. W. Hobson, Rushville, relates the occasion of his parents driving into town just as a "Rootin", tootin'" band of cowboys rode in for the usual, payday celebration, and a stray bullet just grazed Mrs. Hobson's cheek; also of a tenderfoot who had the heels shot from his boots at his reluctance to "dance" for the entertainment of the crowd.

W. F. Bullis remembered that a one time sheriff of the county had walked forth in true Western tradition, to meet an outlaw who had ridden into town, reportedly looking for the "Law-Man". The two came face to face on the platform of the freight depot, and it was not through lack of courage on the sheriff's part that the outlaw beat him to the draw. The latter mounted his horse and rode away -- unmolested.

The city had the usual "Boot-Hill" cemetery, a short distance west

of town. It is reputedly the final resting place of a number of men who died with their boots on, as well as victims of occasional lynchings and the remains of a dance-hall girl who was shot and killed by a gambler in a drunken brawl.

J. D. Novak, Corona, California, recalls that a number of skeletons were reported to have been un-earthed in the process of excavating for various buildings along Main Street.

A dug well, located somewhere in the vicinity of the intersection of Main and Second Streets, and used in early days for the watering of stock was presumed to hold the secret of more than one mysterious disappearance. An old timer professed to know -- or have seen -- the tracks of two men, in a fresh fall of snow one morning. The tracks approached the well. There were a few suspicious red stains, and ONE set of tracks led away. Mute evidence of a spine-chilling tragedy of the darkness, seemed to be written in the whiteness of the snow.

A tall, irregular shaped butte, visible in the Sand-Hills south-west of Valentine is known to have been both look-out and hide-out of notorious "Doc" Middleton and his band of outlaws. Buzzard's Roost by name, tradition has it that a cave with hidden entrance at the foot of the butte, connected with a tunnel -- whether natural or man-made unknown -- leading up inside the mount to a "look-out's nest" on top. Thus, the outlaws, when hard pressed, could hold off a posse from the cave when warned from the top.

Chapter III

Hardships and Resourcefulness of Early Homesteaders

Many of those migrating to this section came without previous experience in farming or ranching -- obviously the practical occupation for this prairie country. Several illustrations of this apparent discrepancy

are seen in this excerpt from a paper by J. D. Novak:

"John Ryschon had apprenticed as a cabinet maker in Vienna, Austria; John Novak was formerly a railroad man; A Mr. Messenger, living north-west of Valentine, was originally a school-teacher; Arthur Brown had been a plumber in New York; George Janssen was a baker in Germany before coming to America; John Jackson --a tool-maker in England -- came directly from there to his homestead on Dry Creek, near the west edge of the 'Table'. So, in addition to other handicaps, they were obliged, in many instances, to learn a new trade, and learn the hard way. For the majority of them came, poorly equipped and with little or no capital.

All experienced the trials of drouth, violent storms and severe cold, prairie fires, Indian scares and, in some cases, actual hunger and want. There were tragedies and sorrows that would surely have broken the spirits of less hardy souls. True teamwork between husband and wife, faith in God and sheer determination won a worthy victory.

Olson's History of Nebraska makes the statement: "Loneliness was, perhaps, the hardest, particularly for the women. If life was difficult on the Plains for the pioneer man, it was practically unbearable for a woman". But she stood and toiled beside her husband through whatever came of trial, joy or sorrow, -- a staunch helpmeet in every sense of the word.

But if there was a dearth of conveniences and money, there was unbounded wealth of neighborliness and genuine brotherly love. Otis Hahn II remarked,

"There just wasn't any money to speak of. But the first hint of trouble, sickness or need brought neighbors from near and far, all ready and eager to help in any and all ways possible." (The writer has had evidence more times than one that this spirit is still very much alive.

There are no better neighbors anywhere than North Table Dwellers.)

Upon arrival, shelters -- often scarcely more than that -- were built of whatever material was available. Shacks were hastily erected of scrap lumber or crates used in moving to the new homes, perhaps boughs or poles if these were obtainable.; Dug-outs were made in hillsides, frequently supplemented with sod. Entire houses of sod were comfortable, but took longer to build, so their construction usually waited until the first crop had been planted. Often sod was built up around the outside of the frail wooden walls, for added warmth and protection.

Homesteaders arrived by prairie schooner, horse or oxen drawn, before the coming of the railroad. Thereafter two families usually loaded an emigrant car together for transportation to the new homes. A team for each family, perhaps a cow, and a few articles of household goods or farming equipment was the rule.

Several told how their fathers plowed, while their mothers followed with axe or spade and dropped seed corn. Men and women together, planted seedlings or cuttings on tree claims and together, hoed and cared for the young trees.

To the mother fell the task of keeping her family clothed by sewing, making and making over garments as long as there was usable material left in them. Once in a while a friendly Indian traded a shawl, blanket, or an occasional pair of moccasins for chickens, eggs a dog for soup, an animal that had been struck by lightning, or died from an injury.

Here too, the hospitality that was second nature to the settlers, stood them in good stead, for a passing party of soldiers, invited to share a meal or a night's lodging, oft-times showed their appreciation by leaving an extra article of clothing, which a handy woman skillfully altered for some member of her family.

Every family owned a small coffee mill that was held between the knees and operated by turning a crank on top by hand. For coffee was invariably purchased "in the bean", -- that is, unground. On occasion, meal for baking purposes was also ground in these little mills -- a slow and laborious process, but white flour was in the nature of a luxury if, indeed it were obtainable at all. (It may be stated here that I know how laborious the process was, from experience, for we "dug" out the old coffee mill belonging to the Bullis family, for that service during the 1949 snow-bound period.)

The Carolyn Bryant story, told by her daughter, Mary, relates that the government issue of commodities to the Indians, when it was flour, was considered by them good for nothing but food for their ponies, consequently the bag was broken open and placed before the animals. If a settler could get to them before this had been done and trade some thing for a sack of flour, he was fortunate, indeed.

John Hobson tells of his father once securing a bag of flour and inviting the neighbors in for a feast. John says the women of that group "baked up" the entire supply for the celebration.

Josie (Ryschon) Dunn recalls her mother soaking grated raw potatoes in water until the starchy flour-like content settled to the bottom of the vessel, when the water was poured off and the flour spread to dry.

Maude (Melton) Ward told of a summer during the drouth years when turnips were the main food item for North Table folk. How they longed for a change of menu! But the Melton family spent a day of visiting at the Hile Crabb home, (a not unusual event in those days). Mrs. Crabb had a new and tempting way of preparing turnips! Maude declared, "Those were the best turnips I ever ate!"

Earlier, when the Melton family first came to Cherry County, they stayed a short time at the Crabb home while their house was being built.

It was there that she (Maude) made her first appearance -- a true pioneer baby.

The story of Jake Stetter as Valentine's first butcher is somewhat reminiscent of the children's "Fairy Shoemaker" story. Jake secured the stump of a large tree to be used as a meat-block, butchered one animal and set up shop. The returns from that animal bought two more, and so the business grew -- according to the story -- but without the aid of the fairies.

Chapter IV

Westward Ho!

WESTERN NEBRASKA, BIOGRAPHY AND REMINISCENCE gives 1881 as the date that George A. Camm and his father -- a civil War Veteran -- took adjoining claims just north of Minnechaduza Canyon, which divides the plateau upon which Valentine stands, from the North Table. After "proving up" on the two claims had been completed, George purchased that belonging to his father and added it to his own homestead.

The Camm family arrived via ox team, which was soon replaced by a team of horses. However, one horse died within twenty four hours of acquisition.

Their house was built in stockade style, with living quarters in the center and barns and sheds at the ends. The arrangement was convenient, but the sod roof leaked badly, making it necessary for the family to live in a tent during any rainy period.

Mr. Camm added to his income by freighting between Valentine and Rosebud, and he was the first to carry mail between the two points. (Though much later, it should be mentioned here that the late Ora Colburn was the first to carry mail by automobile over this same route.) It was while

Mr. Camm was in the freighting business that one of his little girls fell beneath the wheels of a heavy freight wagon and was crushed. Later tragedy struck again when his barn burned, and another child, playing in the haymow, could not be rescued in time and perished in the fire.

During one harvest, he had only a wheelbarrow with which to bring in both corn and vegetables. Courage and perseverance paid out however, and a comfortable, attractive home was built, and a productive, well improved farm evolved.

Another early comer was Jake Martin, who also staked his claim north of the canyon and about a half mile west of the Camm homestead. Mr. Martin dealt in cattle from the start. A bachelor when he came, his first dwelling was a tiny shack, built of boxes, but he replaced it in a few months with a larger and more substantial house.

It was fortunate that he did so, for he returned from a cattle buying trip to find that unexpected company had arrived and taken refuge in his house from a late spring blizzard. On his return, with true western hospitality, he made them welcome, and they remained until able to make their way over the trackless, snow covered prairie to their homesteads. They were the Ryschon and Novak families.

It must have been shortly before this that Jim Pettycrew built his homestead shack (a mere shell) which gave place in a few years to a comfortable farm house. According to WESTERN NEBRASKA, his was the house farthest north on the Table at that time. Not for long was this true, though, for it was also the year that marked several other arrivals.

Some years later, Mr. Pettycrew deeded a sunny plat to the north of his buildings for Richland Cemetery (also known as Harmony Cemetery because of its location in the Harmony District.)

A paper written by George U. Sanmer gives a very interesting account of four or five of that year's arrivals (1883):

"The early 1880's became a leading time of settlement of the North Table area in north Cherry County, Nebraska.

John Novak, his wife, Catherine (Herncall) Novak, and their family, Mary, Joseph, Julia and William, also the John Ryschon family, all of Belle Plain, Iowa, in the spring of 1883, loaded, as did so many at the time, all their belongings into one emigrant car, and headed for the end of the railroad at Valentine, Nebraska. Claims on homesteads and tree claims had been filed and living quarters for the respective families built. The claims chosen by the two families were located some ten or eleven miles northwest of Valentine, and two to two and a half miles south of the South Dakota-Nebraska border." (it may be added, and south that distance from the Sioux Indian Reservation.)

"The moving time was a spring April characteristic of the area when the emigrant car reached Valentine. They started to the claims with their belongings, but Mother Nature decided it was about time for a spring blizzard, and that is what came about in time to catch the new-comers at the Jake Martin home located on the rim of the canyon just north of Valentine. With the common western friendship and neighborliness, they were welcomed into the Martin home for the duration of the storm and blocked trails following. Soon the 1883 spring opened and the families made their way to the new homes on North Table.

About the time this was taking place, the Britt and Sanner families of Delaware County, Iowa, also set out for claims just to the north of the Novak and Ryschon claims. George A. Sanner and his sister, Anna, and her husband, James Hull, lived in the claim shanty on the Sanner Claim while John Britt with his wife, Mary, settled across the road to the west. George Sanner and John Britt each claimed a quarter section homestead and a quarter section tree claim. The Hulls claimed one quarter section just north of the Britt homestead, theirs and the Sanner claims extending to one half mile from the Dakota line.

The common way to secure water on most of these upland claims, was by hand-digging wells, three to four feet in diameter and as deep as was necessary for a good supply of water. Usually an adequate supply of good water was found at a depth of from sixty to seventy feet to a little more than a hundred feet.

In the process of digging a well on his homestead, George A. Sanner fell from the apparatus used to lower and raise him in the well, and the fall was fatal. Thus ended his venture of pioneering on North Table.

After his death, a near relative might claim first chance to re-file on the claim of the deceased, according to government regulations. Henry C. Sanner, George's brother, then filed on both homestead and tree claim of George's.

So in 1885, Henry Sanner, as did so many others, drove to North Table with a team of horses, stopping at several places to break sod for settlers farther east, thus helping finance his moving costs. With completion of residence and required improvements he proved up and became owner of the claim.

The Sanner and Novak land made up the western half of the section and made near neighbors of the two families. Close friendship between Mr. Sanner and the Novaks led to romance between Henry and Mary A. Novak, culminating in marriage. The ceremony was performed by Justice of the Peace Miller, who lived on his claim about three quarters of a mile west of Dry Creek and due west of the present location of Dry Creek School-house (District 56).

George U. Sanner, Anna R. Sanner and Genevieve E. Sanner were born to this marriage. George U. now (1962) teaches in the public school of West Point, Nebraska. Genevieve (Mrs. L. E. Haynes) lives at Neligh, Nebr., and Anna (Mrs. V. E. Maple) passed away in 1936. She is buried at Richland Cemetery on North Table, as is George A. Sanner, who was one of the first, if not actually the first, to be laid in the cemetery." (He was

buried on a hillside on his claim prior to the dedication of the cemetery).

"The schoolhouse of District 56 was a soddy located about a half mile due west of the present frame building. George U. and Anna Sanner along with the younger Ryschon and Novak children and others among whom were the Dunn children, started to school in the soddy. It was finally condemned, and school was held in an old frame house just across the road from the present school site, and to the south, until the new building was completed.

During those early days, opportunities for religious worship were practically nil unless carried on in the homes, and very little of this was accomplished. Some baptisms were performed in homes by Valentine or Rosebud ministers. One of these was the Reverend A. B. Clark, an episcopalean minister of Rosebud Reservation. Transportation facilities were responsible for this situation. After much thought concerning the problem, Henry Fowler, who lived a mile and a half northwest of the schoolhouse, consented to try to start a Sunday School. This was done and Sunday School was held through one or two summers, when it came to an end. Sunday School was also held part time at Harmony Schoolhouse, about four miles to the east, and a few of the Dry Creek people attended when able, travelling on foot or horse back.

Two problems of import that were encountered by the early settlers were prairie fires and range cattle. The unsettled Rosebud Indian Reservation commonly covered with a coat of upland prairie grass was an invitation to prairie fires, which were almost annual affairs. Settlers learned to keep a close watch for this menace. Readiness led to stopping them generally at the state line by means of fire guards or back-firing.

The grassy reservation led too, to free moving herds of cattle, owned by the more thrifty squaw-men of the reservation. Often herds of one, two or three hundred cattle swept down upon the North Table corn growers in early fall. Many times a near clean-up of a field was perpetrated in a

few hours' time. Such incidents occurred at night as well as in the daytime.

One of the great supports of early settlers was the timber of old Fort Niobrara. In early times, the settlers were allowed to take the logs, many of which were pine, for fuel and for building purposes. Few indeed, were the farms that did not have a straw or hay shed with support of these logs, for livestock. Usually several neighbors went together, each with team (Oxen or horses) and wagon and with a long day's driving and work secured a load for each. A few North Table houses were of logs. One of these is in part the home of Clem Kahn now, on what was originally the Sanner homestead.

Finances were meagre in those days, and the fuel and building material were of great importance to the settlers. Later on, the privilege of taking timber from the reservation was withdrawn by the government. But by that time, the settlers had become more able to support themselves.

*The only "allowance" was the sympathetic understanding of the soldiers who patrolled the canyons, and who frequently "failed to see" the trespassing settlers taking out the much needed logs and wood. They were obliged nonetheless, however, to take one or two to the fort as a warning. (Author's

Chapter V

Still They Come!

Homesteaders appear to have literally flocked onto the North Table after the coming of the railroad. It was no longer necessary to unload at ~~Thatcher~~ (so called for a post trader at Fort Niobrara), and transport their belongings to the claims by any means available.

In the autumn of 1883, three "Easterners" met for the first time in Valentine, and, all having the same interest and intention, a three-way friendship was formed. The new friends came together to North Table to select their new homes.

G. P. (Hile) Crabb chose a north-west quarter section, lying along the Dakota line; Otis W. Hahn located in the section to the south of that one, and Benjamin F Hobson in the south-west quarter of the section east of the Crabb homestead section. After filing on their claims, the three went back whence they came, returning the following ~~February~~ to build their abodes. Their wives joined them later in the spring, Mrs. Hobson, at least, driving a covered wagon from Bradley, Iowa. It was on his return trip that Mr. Hahn temporarily "lost his bearings", but we shall learn of that in a later chapter.

Mifflin P. Brosius was another 1883 arrival, in a prairie schooner drawn by a blind team, and bringing with him a cow, a few household goods, a few pieces of farm equipment and one dollar and twenty-five cents in borrowed money. (Who today would dare attempt a start in a new country with the courage and faith to equal that?) Mr. Brosius set up a tent as a dwelling place for his family until the approach of winter made a more substantial apartment imperative.

Arthur Brown settled, with his wife and baby daughter, one and a half miles west of Dry Creek and a mile south of the Dakota line. That baby daughter is now Mrs. Charles Jordan, wife of the proprietor of Valentine's Jordan Hotel. A son of Arthur's, Eddie, as he is generally known, has for many years, been in the employ of the County Highway Department. Two other daughters live in Valentine and a son in Idaho.

George A. Janssen, with his wife and two stepsons, Fred and Hans Bohman, homesteaded a mile south of Brown's. His first house was of sod, with a frame addition later, and made a comfortable home. He soon replaced his first makeshift barns and sheds with buildings of stone and concrete, all his own work. So much for a former baker by training and trade.

Martin Carr's claim was in this vicinity, and Justice-of-the-Peace Miller's claim shack was approximately a mile west of Janssen's. Mrs.

Miller, as related in Reece's HISTORY OF CHERRY COUNTY, was a talented writer, and her articles appeared in various periodicals and magazines of the period. Two daughters, Etta and Bina, were teachers, and each in turn, taught Dry Creek School later.

Henry Fowler and Hylay Cole located near the Dakota border in this -- the Dry Creek -- community. Mrs. C. A. Broad, author of the song, "Valentine", appearing farther on in this story, is a daughter of Henry Fowler. Verna Broad, her son's wife and daughter of Aaron Salmon, a homesteader nearer Valentine, wrote the melody for the song.

W. T. Bullis and his son, W. F. (familiarily known as "Billy"), arrived in Valentine in the spring of 1888, and walked out to North Table to select their claims. Billy recalled that Indians they met as they came through the canyon, almost invariably greeted them with the stiffly raised hand salute and the friendly "How!" so characteristic of the Red Man. He recollected that, as they neared the top of the hill, a man's head popped suddenly from the ground -- to all appearances -- and, probably as startled as they were, he demanded,

"Where you goin'?"

Upon being enlightened, he retorted, laconically,

"Better git a hoss and wagon!" whereupon he disappeared back into his dug-out, "For all the world, like a gopher."

W. T. homesteaded just west of the creek, and a mile from the state line. Billy, not yet twenty-one, chose his site, three miles east of his father's and secured work in the Sand-Hills until of an age to file. His holdings consisted of a quarter section claim and a pre-emption cornering with it on the south-east.

J. S. Kalblinger located in the section south of Billy in 1886. His house of sod was frequently the gathering place of neighbors when an Indian attack threatened, as the thick sod walls were considered good protection from arrows or bullets.

A Civil War Veteran, whose name no one seems now, to recall, claimed the quarter section east of Hyley Cole's residence, and a Jones family just south of him. Mr. Jones was a carpenter, and built the house for his soldier neighbor as well as his own. But Mr. Jones became very discouraged during the drouth of the nineties, and sold his place to Billy Bullis. This is the present Bullis stock-farm, operated by Billy's grandson.

Eric Anderson and his sister, Caroline, took adjoining claims a mile east of the Jones quarter, and along the state line. As so many did in those days, Eric and Caroline built a "double" house on the line between the two claims, each having sleeping quarters in the end of the house on his or her claim. Thus they fulfilled the law of residence, and still had one another's companionship, which meant so much in the new, strange, and, oft-times dangerous land.

Charles Barker was a not distant neighbor of the Andersons.

Dave Durn's homestead was located a mile south of Kalblinger's with Allisen S. Graeff joining him on the south, T. P. Spratt on the east and a family named Welch on the quarter east of Spratt's

John Borman's claim was on the east side of Dry Creek, and south of the Cole homestead, west of Jones'.

C. M. Van Meire, whom Mr. Reese called "The Burbank of the Sand Hills", located in the Harmony Community, east of the Dry Creek settlement. He not only had the first orchard on the Table, but several evergreen groves of his planting, are still standing, a very fitting memorial to the homesteader who so loved beauty.

E. G. and son, Grant Perkins, also G. P. Crabb's son, Ralph, had claims in this vicinity. Grant Perkins, too, almost hid his buildings in a large, beautiful grove of trees -- a genuine accomplishment in those early days.

John Jackson, who candidly owned that he did not know which end of the plow "to hitch to", when he first came to Cherry County, but built up to an attractive and prosperous "lay-out" through industry and determination, as well as W. H. Mumford, who operated corn sheller and threshing machines in the area for years. George Austin and Billy Ward, all lived in the south half of the North Table. "Uncle Billy" Ward, as he was affectionately known, built Ward School-house (District # 2). Wm. Taylor, a half mile east of the school, Wm. Pettycrew, Wm. Cottle, a Miss Mills, Albert Melton, Martin Becker and W. E. Jenkins, who later moved to Canada, all lived in the vicinity of the school. Jas. Marley, Daniel Hubbard, H. M. Cramer and sons, T. W. and Max, Thos. and W. H. Harper, Matthew Bowen, A. J. Folk, Pat Casey and Jas. Smith were all Table Top Dwellers at one time.

Pat MacIlhon, whose homesteader status the writer has not been able to establish, was a genuine old-time fiddler, who could and would set your toes to tapping with the "Twitter over strings", as could Forrest Melton, a son of Albert and Hannah Melton.

Sylvanus and Mary (Fenner) Moon homesteaded the present Roy Lower place. A daughter of theirs -- Mrs. Queen Dowden -- was, for years, employed in the office of the County Treasurer, Albert Foster. Roy Lower informs us that his father, Pete Lower, was, in 1882, located at Fort Niobrara, and freighted from that point, with a six-ox team, to Boiling Springs Ranch, near Cody -- about forty-five miles. He subsequently married Miss Jenny Kneeland and took his homestead near what is now Kewanee.

Fred Bohman -- George Janssen's stepson -- homesteaded a relinquishment married Miss Caroline Von Seggern, and spent the remainder of his life

on the claim which he developed into one of the most attractive, well-kept, homes on the Table.

The present Valentine Librarian, Mrs. Earl Ladd, is a grand-daughter of Wm. Taylor and great-grand-daughter of Captain Howell, a Civil-War Veteran, who operated the first hotel in Rosebud, South Dakota.

Postmaster Doug Hammond is a grandson of John Ryschon and son of former Sheriff Bert Hammond. Robert Hammond and Mrs. Sadie Richards are Sheriff Hammond's children, also.

Harold Jordan is Clerk of District Court, Western Union operator and is in business with his father in the Jordan Hotel.

An earlier postmaster, Ralph Brosius, was a son of Mifflin P. Brosius, and another son, Roy, was for many years, an accountant in Valentine.

John Jackson's daughter, Mrs. Gladys Brown, is postmistress at Crookston, Nebraska, while a son, Andrew, carries mail between Crookston and Rosebud, South Dakota.

Mrs. Edna Jackson -- B. F. Hobson's daughter, -- was a former Cherry County teacher and later Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Gladys Mc Pherson, a daughter of J. S. Kalblinger, was at one time, a County Superintendent in South Dakota, teaches now in Valentine Public Schools; Otis D. Hahn, son of Otis W., has for some years, been connected with the "Triple A" Office in Valentine; Charles Bullis, a son of W. T., operated a livery barn in partnership with Bert Hammond -- sheriff and son of an earlier "law-man", who came to Valentine in the early '80's. John Bullis was an undertaker, first in Valentine, then in Sturgis, South Dakota, finally of Hardin, Montana, where he was County Coroner at the time of his death, when his son, Everett, took over the business.

This mentions only a few of the descendents of the hardy pioneers who uphold the standards raised by their pioneer parents.

Chapter VI

Early Days and Experiences

Miss Frances Schmalek had changed her name to Mrs. John Ryschon, and in 1883, with her husband and four children, began a new experience of living in a dug-out -- in a Cherry County hillside near the location of the later building site. The buildings that are now occupied by a son, Frank, and his family, on the North Table.

Like most of North Table settlers, the Ryschon family arrived in the spring, and took time only for the simplest and most easily made dwellings until spring planting had been completed. No well was dug, and water was hauled in barrels from Dry Creek, a mile and a half distant. Later, Arthur Brown supervised the digging of a well on the premises.

As they had been delayed in reaching the homestead by a late spring blizzard, so were they flooded by a cloudburst in July. Temperamental Nebraska lost no time in displaying the rapidity with which she could change from one extreme to another for the benefit -- or confusion -- of her new tenants. A neighbor, calling at the Ryschon home to ask how they had weathered the rain storm, discovered Mrs. Ryschon almost knee-deep in water, going about her work with a baby in her arms, while the older children perched on a table to keep dry.

When Otis W. Hahn returned in February following his filing on his homestead, he arrived with two teams of horses, two cows and a small supply of farm equipment, in a snow-storm. The snow made it difficult to determine his exact location. Believing himself to be at the corner of his claim, he set up his temporary shelter of boughs, beside a buffalo wallow full of snow water from a recent thaw. It may be explained here that the buffalo wallow is a large bowl-shaped depression in the ground, believed by many to have been formed in wet weather, by the buffalo lying on his side and rotating his body like a top. Buffalo are often infected with mange, and this was probably his method of scratching, or it could

have been, to coat his body with mud as a protection from flies and other troublesome insects.

Whatever his reason, the wallow in question was a ready source of water animals and human consumption, for both Mr. Hahn and Mr. Crabb, his neighbor on the north.

But they sighted a flock of prairie chickens one morning, and set out in pursuit, hoping to bag a chicken dinner. Again it was snowing, and, the ground being hidden beneath its feathery whiteness, a wheel of the wagon dropped into an unseen hole. Upon investigation, this was found to be one of the holes dug to mark the corners of sections. Instead of building on the north-west corner of his claim, as he supposed, he had set up his shack in the exact center of the quarter section.

Miss Lura Melton had become his wife in 1880, and she joined her husband later in the spring, when a combination soddy and dug-out had replaced the first lodge he had built. Here Mrs. Hahn taught the first school in the Harmony District -- in her own home. Incidentally, the name, Harmony, was adopted in memory of the church and Sunday School the Hahns and Crabbs had attended in Orrsburg, Missouri, and the sod school-house built later was used for Sunday School and Church services too.

Otis D. started to school in the new sod school-house when it was built. He returned home after his first day of school to tell his mother about "The prettiest little girl, who had red hair and 'spots' all over her face." Obviously, even very small boys recognize the piquant winsomeness of a glowing halo above a freckled little nose.

As did others of those difficult days, the Hahns surmounted all failures of crops and other hardships, increased their holdings to a three hundred twenty acre farm, on which horse and cattle breeding supplemented other farming activities, and a comfortable home soon took the place of the early soddy. There were three girls and two boys in the Hahn family.

Mr. Hahn took an active interest in all local affairs and became a

recognized leader in his community, also serving one or two terms as deputy county treasurer.

Ben F. Hobson had built his claim shack too, in February, and his wife -- the former Adelia Jane Craft of Bradford, Iowa -- drove west in a covered wagon in June, to her new home.

Mr. Hobson made the acquaintance of a camp of cowboys who were holding a large herd of Government cattle on the reservation that summer. The lonely fellows, probably having not seen a white woman in months, asked him to bring his wife and baby to the camp one evening. He complied with the request and the foreman presented her with a quarter of beef -- a royal gift, to be sure.

Eight girls and two boys came to bless this home. And the dwelling became, after years, a favorite gathering place for a social evening or following services on a Sunday afternoon. -- Could it have been that the bevy of attractive daughters had something to do with this popularity?

The story was often told of Mrs. Hobson, that, should she find as late as midnight that there was no bread in the house, she would not sleep until she had baked a pan of biscuits, lest some wayfarer should happen along and she would have no food to set before him.

Mr. Hobson exchanged the oxen with which he came west, for a team of mules and lost both along with the wagon in a prairie fire that first fall. He purchased a team of horses, only to have them struck by lightning in a short time. He speculated in cattle, and lost forty-six of them with corn-stalk disease. Like his neighbors, he had several crops destroyed by drought and hail, and, like them, he stuck to the guns until the battle was won.

True to their mischievous nature, the cowboys of the region seemed to delight in putting on a startling display for the benefit -- or discomfiture -- of the newcomers. Jake Martin confessed that, had he not spent all his money for a ticket to come west, he had gotten onto the next train and returned whence he came, when he saw a number of reckless, young

riders gallop through Main Street, riddling the few signs with bullets.

Jake tried various ways of getting a start. Freighting with oxen, he at one time owned ten yoke as well as a carload of cattle. An epidemic of Texas Fever wiped out his entire herd; he cooked for a government camp to earn enough for a new start, and again, lost all but ten in a blizzard. After a series of trials and failures at various enterprizes, in as many localities, he finally made his "stake" and returned to his homestead on the edge of Minnechadusa Canyon. He married Miss Eva Chaufy in 1894, and became a successful farmer-rancher. His solid, compact set of ranch buildings were in striking contrast to the flimsy shack that had been his first dwelling on North Table.

Martin Becker had in 1882, married Miss Anna Kneirim, and in 1886, brought his young wife to Cherry County. They spent three years in a soddy which they then replaced with one of logs. The couple experienced the usual hardships of pioneer life, at one time giving up and moving to Wisconsin. But the spell of Cherry County was too strong, and they came back with one hundred twenty five dollars to invest in cattle. Apparently the turning point had been reached at last, and Mr. Becker worked up to become successful in the modest manner of Table dwellers.

He was active in educational and commercial affairs of his community, and held the office of director of his school district for ten years.

W. T. (Grandfather) Bullis, a Veteran of the War between the states and of Sherman's famous March to the Sea, filed on his North Table homestead in 1885. The following year, he brought his wife -- formerly Miss Eliza Zorn -- and his family of two sons and two daughters to their Cherry County home. An older son, Billy, having already homesteaded a few miles east of his father.

Grandfather spent three years on his claim and being then appointed deputy sheriff, moved to Valentine, where he served in this capacity for

four years. Another appointment made him Postmaster at Fort Niobrara, which office he resigned after two years, and returned to Valentine. In a short time, he again moved to the North Table and set up a general store at Britt, about a half mile north-west of the John Britt homestead. He was instrumental in establishing a post office in the store building, and in that connection, was one of the first to be permitted to "hook up" to the Valentine-to-Rosebud telephone line with its tall poles of iron tubing. No less indestructible material could have withstood the frequent prairie fires that swept down through the reservation, for the Indians, antagonistic to the bitter end, still tried, at intervals, to frighten or drive the hated White Man away, by harassments of various kinds.

Later, Grandfather again held the office of marshal in Valentine for a number of years before his final retirement.

W. F. Bullis, whose short stature and general kewpie-like appearance instantly won him the title of "Billy", was possessed with a spirit of curiosity that led him into strange and, sometimes, hazardous experiences. The cow-boys also played a part in his first impressions of Valentine. Instead of being frightened, however -- or perhaps curiosity just outweighed fear-- by their noisy, wild antics, he determined to find out what it was all about. Consequently he followed them to the saloon, where another tender-foot had already gone. This other was invited to join the boys in a drink, which he haughtily declined. He was informed that if he would not drink with them, he could dance for them. This he did not refuse to do when the bullets began thudding uncomfortably close to his heels! Leaping and gyrating, he managed to work his way to the door and so escaped his tormentors. Billy felt some trepidation -- one of the number turned to him with the terse remark, "You're next!"

But before the fire-works could begin, a tall, soft-spoken member of their outfit dropped an arm across Billy's shoulders, with the surprising assertion,

"He's my little pal! Let him alone!"

No one cared to contradict him. Needless to say, the odd pair became fast friends.

That summer, when Billy reached his twenty-first birthday, and was on the way from the ranch where he had been working, to file formally on the claim he had chosen, he was invited to have dinner with a round-up crew. Their repast was rudely interrupted by the roar of rapid hoof-beats and a series of wild whoops and yells. There was a general be-scatterment as a rider galloped through the very center of the camp, trailing a huge bob-cat at the end of his lariat. The cat was dead, as they discovered when the rider turned back to laugh at them for panicking.

During that first summer in Cherry County, Billy spent a night with a friend in the latter's dug-out. When they were preparing for bed, a sudden ominous buzzing in the vicinity of the friend's pallet started an investigation that brought to light a large rattlesnake that was not particularly pleased at being disturbed. The friend made short work of Mr. Rattler, but Billy chose to spend the night out under the friendly stars. When he built his claim shack shortly there-after, he set it on stills about two feet off the ground!

A story Billy often told of his early boyhood gives insight into the mischievous turn so essentially a part of his nature all through life:

Billy and his younger brother, John, were walking home from the field where they had been with Grandfather Bulkin. Billy carried a small hatchet he had been using in some task, and, seizing a moment when John was occupied with something else, he ran ahead and hid in the tall grass along the road. The boys had been reading Indian tales, and when John came innocently by and suddenly sighted a "tomahawk" lifted and waved menacingly above the grass, he never stopped running until he sank, white-faced and terrified, into a chair in Grandmother's kitchen. It was a hot day and poor John was almost in a state of collapse. Grandmother instantly saw through the flimsy joke, and Billy was punished as befitted the occasion, and, as he had known he would be, from the start. But, to him, the brief moment of fun justified

the painful result.

In the early eighties, in Iowa, he had belonged to the Iowa Militia, and proudly displayed a gold watch, first prize won in a sharp-shooting contest, and inscribed with this fact and his name.

Also in Iowa, a farmer who had just purchased a new corn-planter, and was using it for the first time, got into an argument with a neighbor, and was shot and killed, while sitting on the implement. At the resulting sale, no one seemed inclined to bid on the planter, so Billy idly made a small bid to start things, and found himself in possession of the "blondy" machine. Several other farm tools were bought at the same sale, and the youngster came west somewhat better equipped for his homesteading venture than many others had been. The railroad extended to Valentine by that time, and he promptly shipped his new possessions to Cherry County.

Alice Fowler Broad explained how some one had lightly asked her, one day, why she did not write a song about Valentine. She had laughingly declared,

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" But the idea was not so easily dismissed, and a few days later, she sat down at her desk and wrote the words of her soon popular western song, "Valentine". Her daughter-in-law, Verna Salmon Broad, set it to a merry, lilting tune, and it has been published in sheet music and recorded by Jess Summers and his "Riders of the Sunset Trail". It is quoted here by gracious permission of the author:

VALENTINE

Oh, Valentine's a cowboy town
Since early frontier days,
When cowboys rode their broncs to town
To spend their monthly pay.
Cho. With a "Yipp-ee-i-ea," and a "Yipp-ee-i-eo,"
It makes no reason or rhyme,
And it's the best of all the West,
The town of Valentine.

Cowboys drove the cows to town

O'er long and dusty trails;

The bronc was known as man's best friend,

His boss he never failed.

Cho.

Valentin is growing up;

The cowboy's had some luck --

He rides to town in an aeroplane,

His cows ride in a truck.

Cho.

Valentine's a cowboy town,

Where friends all like to meet --

With a cheery "Hi!" when they're passing by,

On Valentine's Main Street.

Cho.

Following their mother's death in London, England, Henry Morris, his wife and his sister, Miss Harriet Morris, decided to come to America to be with another brother who had already settled in Chicago. Miss Harriet's fiance, John Jackson, joined the little party and the four young people made the voyage together. After their arrival in Chicago, John and Harriet were married, and all three couples came to Valentine -- the then end of the railroad. The intention was -- as Mrs. Henry Jackson relates -- to purchase oxen -- they already owned wagons -- and whatever else was required and proceed westward by wagon.

The young English people made many friends in Valentine, where each group -- the Londoners on one hand, the mid westerners on the other -- found one another of considerable interest, if not amusement in some instances. On one occasion, the ladies, seeing the smoke of a prairie fire to the north, and thinking it did not seem to be very far away, set out to walk to the scene. After they had walked what seemed like miles, they asked some one they met how much farther away it was. Imagine their con-

sternation at being told that it was forty-five miles from Valentine and on the Rosebud Indian Reservation!

When preparations were finally completed, Mrs. Henry states, the little covered wagon caravan started toward the West, making their first camp a few miles out from town. It must have been a lonely, weird experience for the city-bred, eastern women at best, but when several parties of Indians passed uncomfortably close to the camp in the shadowy hills along the Minnehadusa, and finally, a band of cowboys who had apparently imbibed too freely while in town, rode past with their "Whoopee-ii-yi" and their six-guns blazing, young Mrs. Jackson evidently came to the conclusion that "The farther west one went, the wilder things became." She issued her ultimatum:

"You may all go on if you want to. I go no farther!"

The Morris couples went on. John and Harriet homesteaded on the banks of Dry Creek, not far from the town they purchased later and where they spent the rest of their lives. A son, Henry, and his wife are the present owners of the ranch on North Table.

As we have already learned, Mr. Jackson was a tool-maker by trade, and had had no experience in farming or ranching. The first year, he did black-smithing for his neighbors in return for their help and advice in the intricacies of life on the plains of Western Nebraska. He must have been an apt pupil, for he became a successful rancher, with one of North Table's most attractive homes.

Henry Morris returned to Valentine some years later and set up his own blacksmithing business.

Allison S. Graeff and Mrs. Celinda (Onderkirk) Graeff, were 1886 arrivals equipped with a team, wagon, plow and cultivator to begin their farming operations. Like the majority of their neighbors did, the Graeff family spent the first few years in a soddy. They knew the same crop failures through drouth and hail as the rest. A fire in 1901 destroyed barn and sheds with all their contents.

In 1906, when the youngest child, Lucella, lost

her life in a run-away accident when starting home from school one evening. The courageous couple did not allow even this grief to daunt them, and eventually saw their quarter section claim increased to a nine hundred, sixty acre farm with excellent improvements. Beside Luella, there were four other children, one of whom died in infancy.

Arthur Graeff remembers his mother sending the children under the table to keep them dry when it rained, as the roof leaked so badly, and how his father steadied the wall in a tornadoic wind, by standing with his hands braced against it, fearing it might collapse.

Joseph S. Kalblinger and Miss Sarah J. Manel were married in 1885, and early the next spring, Joe filed on his claim on North Table. Mrs. Kalblinger came to join her husband in the autumn.

In later years, the couple purchased a farm several miles south of the homestead, which was, in due time, built up into a prosperous farm home. But the house on the homestead was a sturdy one of sod, where the neighbors held fort with them, twice, at least, when an Indian attack seemed imminent, in preference to making the long drive to the Fort.

Mr. Kalblinger was one of the first to see the possibilities of dairy farming in this area, and was the first to ship cream from Valentine to a large creamery.

A heart-warming story is told about Mr. Kalblinger's father that seems characteristic enough of the pioneer spirit to be included in this narrative, and is certainly representative of the priceless heritage bequeathed the early settlers by their fore-bears.

The elder Mr. Kalblinger came to America from Bavaria, and recognizing the vast opportunities in the land of the Free as compared with European countries, he sponsored the passage of a number of his old neighbors to share America's blessings. His reward for the service -- not mentioning his pleasure in the doing of a kind deed -- was one horse and one dollar.

Eric and Caroline Anderson's uncle had homesteaded about where the Dry Creek School is now located. Discouraged by the apparent wildness of the new country, he relinquished his claim and returned to his old home. Caroline bought his claim shack to add to her own small house, and neighbors came to help her move it and set it up. It was while this operation was in progress, that a young man rode up and stopped to look on, and some one introduced Caroline to Young Perry Bryant. The chance acquaintance soon developed into a romance, and the couple took the marriage vows in the dining room of the Doncher House, where Caroline sometimes worked for Miss Doncher. The chaplain from Fort Niobrara performed the marriage ceremony.

Perry plowed with a horse and an ox, Caroline following the plow and planted corn with the use of a spade to cover it. Perry worked in his spare time for the proprietor of Half-Way House -- a road house and relay station for the Rosebud Stage. Half-Way House was located on Antelope Creek in Southern South Dakota, about half way between Valentine and Rosebud.

Howard Jaycox and Eva Harper were both homesteaders at the northern edge of Harmony District. In 1886, they decided to join forces and secured the sixty-fourth marriage license to be issued in Cherry County, from Judge Zarr, the Reverend Mr. Skinner, first Methodist Minister of Valentine, tying the nuptial knot.

The young people made their home on Eva's homestead, in the section just north of the present home of their daughter, Mrs. Edith Lurz -- widow of the late Joe Lurz.

Joe, Abe and John Hobson -- brothers of Ben Hobson -- also homesteaded in the Harmony Community, and Fisher (Fish) Pettycrew's claim cornered with his brother, James', in the section to the south-east.

Other names that may be listed here, but of whom the writer has little or no further information, are: Henry Austin, whose son, George, married Miss Florence Harper, one of the earliest and best loved teachers of Cherry

County; Augustus Shaw; David Cogswell. Myron Cogswell and his sister Mabel, were two of the children who attended school in the O. W. Hahn home, before the school house was built. David Snodgrass; Thomas and Lionel Proctor; Martha Gallino; Benjamin Reeves and Isabelle Van Metre are others.

The grove of noble pines that Matt Van Metre set out on his sister, Isabelle's homestead, have become one of North Table's landmarks. It is located about six and one half miles north of Valentine, on the west side of Highway #83. A quarter of a mile farther north, and a few rods east of the highway, stands the old windmill tower on the original Fish Pettycrew homestead.

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Some of the first pupils in the new Harmony school-house with Mrs. Searby as teacher, were: Otis DeWitt Hahn and his sister, Mabel; Rene and Rose Fowler; Mary, Edna, Eliza and Lizzie Hobson. Ten years, or more, later, in 1903, Mary Hobson taught the school, and some of her pupils were: Ina, Leon, Floyd and William Spratt; Olive and Clair Van Metre; Belle, Fern and Frank Hobson; Fae and Leon Pettycrew; Clyde, Charlie and Percy Black; Glen Granger and Gussie Graeff -- Arthur's daughter and Allison's granddaughter.

Orders were drawn on Harmony School Treasurer during 1924 - 25 for teachers, Eunice Hobson (Mrs. Shem), Margaret Sexton (Mrs. Ed. Brown), Mildred Shelbourn (Mrs. Guy Bishop).

It is interesting to note that Lizzie (Hobson) Sharp, Mae Sexton Kellogg, a daughter-in-law of Dewey and Etta (Miller) Kellogg,; Edith (Jaycox) Lurz; and Mildred (Shelbourn) Bishop -- a sister of Mrs. O. D. Hahn -- are all teaching in Cherry County at the present time. The familiar old names are still very much in evidence -- keeping alive old friendships, memories and traditions.

Chapter VII

Indian Scares

Usually, the settlers did not panic easily, choosing to stand their ground at their own or a neighbor's cabin when an attack seemed pending. Several families might gather to spend a watchful night at the home of one or another, rather than leave their scant property totally unprotected.

In a few instances, the women and children were taken to the sanctuary of Valentine or the fort, while the men returned home. Their raiding neighbors to the north would have left nothing for them to return to otherwise.

Billy Bullis returned from a day's absence at one time, to find that a new spring wagon seat he had left beside the cabin door, as well as his axe and various other articles were missing. He followed the tracks of a wagon several miles up onto the reservation to an Indian camp. There he discovered the stolen articles beside a tent. Feigning a bravado he did not feel, he got down, claimed the things, and loading them into his wagon, drove away. Aside from surly looks and angry mutterings, he encountered no opposition.

Again and again the wisdom of establishing a military post at this vantage point -- Fort Niobrara -- was proved. The too frequent threats of uprisings or attack would scarcely have always ended in mere threat, had it not been for the nearness of the Fort on the Niobrara. The prompt dispatching of troops to the trouble zone, served on various occasions, to quiet the seething un-rest of the Sioux. While, in clear weather, the morning and evening "boom" of the cannon could be heard even beyond the state line, and on rare occasions, the notes of the bugle might drift on the air, bringing warm re-assurance to the settlers, and cold warning to would-be aggressors. Is it any wonder the old Fort and the brave men who manned it are remembered affectionately?

A haunting uncertainty was ever present, even in the hearts of the

bravest, while actual terror was often the lot of wives and mothers among the settlers in those trying days.

In the autumn of 1887, Billy Bullis returned to Iowa to claim his long-time sweetheart -- Miss Cora E. Myers -- as his bride, and bring her to his homestead cabin.

Like many other settlers' wives, Cora was terrified of the Indians.

A haunting dread of Red-Skin foe
Beset the bride of long ago;
She never left the house before
Securely locking the one door.
But once forgot the window latch
When starting to the garden patch.
Then Billy, weary of the heat
Came for a drink and bite to eat.
A tight-locked door was what he found,
But soon perceived on looking round,
A window Cora had neglected --
And soon an entrance was effected!
On her return, poor Cora spied
The open sash; heard steps inside --
Sly Billy, chuckling with delight,
Too late saw she had taken flight.
Then, horrified by what he'd done,
The prankster too began to run.
But Cora did not look behind;
His calls and footsteps to her mind,
Meant savage chase and fierce war-cry,
And only caused her feet to fly!
Till full-spent, sinking on the plain,

She thought to never rise again.

But Billy's ~~arms~~ were tender, strong;
His contrite words sweeter than song;
Deep thankfulness took place of fears,
And gentle chiding stopped her tears.

Billy and another man were standing guard one night when the neighbors had gathered, in fear of attack. Remembering that such attacks were reported to frequently occur in the early morning hours, Billy put his ear to the ground, hoping to detect any sound of an advancing party. He signalled his companion to do likewise. Both men heard what they believed to be the stealthy "Clap, clap" of horses feet to the north. The two crept on their stomachs for several hundred yards to the crest of a hill -- and the grass is thickly interspersed with cactus in North Cherry County -- to discover that the sounds they heard were the cropping of the crisp grass by a small herd of calves. It would be difficult to say whether relief or chagrin were uppermost in their minds at that moment.

Several wagons had passed in apparent haste, when Billy, suspecting the reason, went to the road to ask the next driver about it. The reply was:

"Indians on the war-path! No time to talk! Got to get to the fort!"

At this point, the man's wife cried out --

"pa! We haven't got all the children! One's gone!"

"pa" made a hasty survey --

"Must've bounded out. No time to go back! One of the neighbors'll pick him up. Giddap!"

And the wagon, with its precious load -- minus one -- rattled on down the road!

However, Mrs. Jackson's account tells us that the father did go back, as soon as he had seen his family safely housed in town. It is presumed that he found the missing child, for no one heard any contrary report.

Three mornings in succession, Billy had found several Indian ponies grazing in his corn-field. Three mornings in succession, he drove them north onto the reservation, but when he again found them there the fourth morning, he shut them up in the corral.

About noon, an Indian boy came in search of them. True to Indian custom, he accepted an invitation to dinner. Then Billy told him,

"Tell the owner he may take his ponies when he pays for the damage ~~they~~ have done to my corn."

The youngster departed, to return shortly with a tall striking looking Indian, who rode haughtily past Billy without deigning him a glance or a word of greeting. Straight to the corral he went. Billy followed,

"You may have your horses when you pay for the corn they have eaten," he told the Indian. Still ignoring him, the arrogant fellow went to the ponies and examined each one's teeth.

"No wahka maize!" he declared scornfully. Thereupon he threw open the corral gate and the ponies ran out. He mounted and followed them. As the boy prepared to do likewise, Billy demanded,

"Who is that fellow?"

"That", called the grinning youngster over his shoulder, "is Sitting Bull!"

Maude Ward recalls her parents, -- the Albert Meltons -- telling of glimpsing a brilliantly dyed feather or a dark body, behind a tree or bush, when passing through the canyon, on their arrival in Cherry County. After they were settled on their claim, they on one occasion watched with neighbors all night, from a dug-out behind their cabin, when an attack was considered almost a certainty.

Hile Crabb, after such a night of watching at the Hahn home, looked out in the early morning, to see a "coyote" on a knoll not far distant. He challenged Ouis W. to prove the marksmanship of which the latter was

justly proud. The demonstration was given, and then both men began to doubt, suddenly, that the animal had been a coyote after all. Consequently an investigation was made, and "straws were drawn" to determine which one was to inform Joe Kalblinger that his dog had been mistaken for a coyote and shot.

Eventually, guns and ammunition were furnished the settlers from the fort, to enable them to hold off an attack until help could come. At the threat of an uprising in 1890, the Hobson family drove the six or seven miles to the Martin home, only to find the house already full of refugees. Though only two miles from Valentine, they returned home, only to retrace their steps -- on to Valentine this time -- where Mrs. Hobson stayed with the children for several days.

Arthur Brown occasionally worked on the railroad in spare time, he was a "well-man", and on the occasions that his axe needed sharpening, he walked the eight or nine miles to the Camm homestead -- the nearest location of a grind-stone. Mrs. Brown spent many fear-filled days and nights in his absence, for she lived in constant fear of the Indians, and the scared livestock made it necessary for her to remain at home.

One day during that memorable first summer, she had observed dark, half-naked forms skulking among the hills, so she locked the door, and hung blankets over the windows, then hid in a dark corner with the baby in her arms. The prowlers tried to open the door. They shook the window frames, in the attempt to gain entrance. Fortunately, the house was well built, and they finally gave up and left.

The Browns once rose in the middle of the night to join forces with the Martin Carrs, a mile or more south of their house, and neighbors gathered at their sod house several nights. On such occasions, each one brought his dog along. The dog is a favorite soup ingredient among Indians, and one left alone would almost certainly be gone, were he left unguarded.

On the evening in question, there were several dogs beside the one belonging to the Browns at the homestead west of the creek. As the humans conversed in hushed voices in the house, a sudden confused uproar out doors sent the men of the party running out, guns in hand. Surely the expected attack had come! Fancy their relief at discovering the dogs in full cry, pursuing a small herd of calves that had been grazing near.

Only once did the Browns go to Valentine for safety, and then, Mr. Brown left his wife and family in town while he made the long drive to Rosebud in the effort to find out whether there were actual danger or whether the disturbing reports were exaggerated -- something that would have been difficult to say.

A family living about a mile north of the Brown's went to Iowa for the winter at one time. Lights and voices, one evening, at the vacant place sent Mr. Brown and a neighbor crawling toward the buildings in the dusk. They discovered a company of Negro soldiers en route to Rosebud. Arthur returned to inform the others there was nothing to fear that night. But the family was no-where to be found. An anxious search that probably did not take as long as it seemed, under the circumstances, revealed Mrs. Brown and the children hiding in a partially dug cellar -- as yet without steps! With nerves strained almost to the breaking point, she had not realized that, had there been an attack, she would have been hopelessly trapped.

The next morning they watched the sunlight flash from the rifles of the departing soldiers.

This troop of Negro soldiers may have been the same that Edwin Bohman told of. The poor fellows, not expecting ever to return from this expedition into the dreaded Indian Country, and many of them were said to have buried their money and valuables some where near the state line, along the creek.

Arthur Graeff also tells of a youthful soldier who stopped at the Graeff's. Knowing he was near entering the Indian territory, he was almost

in a state of collapse, believing that to cross the line was to expose himself to such an ambush as had been the destruction of General Custer and his brave men.

Returning to the Caroline Bryant story, we are told that an Indian man who had cut his hair after the manner of the White Man, or an Indian woman who had married a white man, were in greater danger than the Whites themselves, in the event of hostilities. For such a one was considered a traitor to his or her people.

So it happened that Mrs. "Yank" O'Brien was panic-stricken -- as she well might be -- when, in the absence of her white husband, she discovered painted warriors creeping stealthily through the draws. In feverish haste she harnessed a team of half-broken bronchos and, with her young niece, who was staying with her, drove at break-neck speed to the Bryant home. She was unable to stop the frightened horses and it was only after they had lunged over the wood-pile, dragging the reeling, lurching wagon behind them, that Perry managed to get hold of the reins and bring them to a halt. It was a miracle that she had been able to drive them that far without a mishap, for in her haste, she had failed to cross the inside reins. The Indians who had followed the wagon, turned back at the state line.

In a more humorous vein is Joe Ryschon's ghost story. Joe and Frank, his brother, were freighting between Valentine and Rosebud. Night overtook them on the return trip, several miles north of the Half-Way House, and as the horses were tired too, they prepared to make camp on the prairie. But, happening to look back the way they had come, they saw a white-robed figure approaching in the half light. Hastily, they hooked up the weary team once more, and, whipping them to a run, sped on to the Half-Way House. They refused shelter in the house, preferring to remain near their horses, fearing horse thieves might set them a-foot. Joe was wakened -- if indeed he slept -- by something feeling over the surface of the tarp covering the

wagon, beneath which the boys had spread their blankets. Lifting the edge of the canvas, he discovered the ghost just outside the shelter. His shout brought Sam Hustin out with a shot-gun, and Joe yelled,

"The ghost! There he goes!"

For the apparition was running around the corner of the house. It stopped and turned back at Sam's hail,

"Stop or I'll shoot!" (Well it might. Sam was known to be an excellent gun-man and crack shot. Indeed he was suspected of having been, at one time, a member of the notorious Jesse James Gang. No proof of the rumor was forthcoming, for all Sam would say of his past was that he had once been with an outfit where he had to be a crack-shot.)

The ghost proved to be an old Indian who explained in his broken English that his squaw had left him, and when he saw the tarp covered freight-wagon, he thought she was hiding in it. Noting the youth of the drivers, he attempted to frighten them into "giving her up to him."

An epidemic of small pox among the Indians caused no little anxiety to the Whites as well as the stricken Brules. The cries and wails of the mourning ritual were a terrifyingly eery sound, and continued, as a rule, far into the night. Two or more families to a house, the settlers spent weary, watchful hours, night after night during that sorrowful period. Children were put to bed on the floor to be out of range of arrows or bullets, should the grief-crazed Red-skins attack. Women talked in hushed voices, and men took turns standing guard behind barricades of barrels, boxes and bags of sand at windows and doors. A few hours of sorely needed rest might be had when the weary Indians were, themselves, forced to rest, and the wailing ceased for a brief respite.

One such night is recalled by Jim Novak, then a small child. He believes the gathering to have been at the Kalblinger home, which is probably correct,

as the Kaiblinger record mentions that neighbors twice held fort in their soddy. J. D. remembers the barrels of sand at the door and bags of "something" between kitchen and living-room, where the children and their mothers were. Scarcely yet a toddler, he crept over the bags in the door-way and to the men in the kitchen. But these grim silent men, with guns in hand or at side, were strangers to the confused youngster. An older brother, usually ready for a romp, gave him a sober, pre-occupied greeting. He crept sadly back to his mother's side.

Billy and Cora Bullis reminisced of another night at the Kaiblinger stronghold. As usual, the children were asleep on the floor, while the men kept watch outside in this instance, hoping their voices would not disturb the women, whom they hoped, would take the opportunity also, to take a needed rest.

But toward midnight the mourning chant in the north seemed to gain in intensity, rising to a frenzied shriek, sinking to a moaning cry and rising again in shrill crescendos. Then -- a flaming arrow soared high into the night sky, to be followed by another, and another.

The women were roused to get the children ready for the drive to the fort, and the horses were harnessed. But in the haste to dress the drowsy children, one pair of little shoes could not be found. Before the missing footwear was found, the Indians elected to call it a day -- or night -- and the reservation sank into blessed silence. The children were returned to bed, and the flight in the night ended before it began.

Joe Ryschon again describes his and Dave Dunn's "fumigation" with sulphur fumes at the Half-Way House before being allowed to proceed into the small pox infested country on a freighting trip. (It would be difficult to say which would be worse -- the prevention or contamination.)

Billy Bullis, also freighting, was more frightened than he dared show,

when two Indians -- apparently half crazed with grief -- ran out from a pine-clad ravine, and ran beside his wagon, brandishing knives and tomahawks. He feigned not to notice them, and they soon returned whence they had come -- while Billy wiped perspiration from a face that he knew, must be several shades whiter than its wont.

A hillside above Dry Creek, and less than a mile north of the state line, is the site of numerous, rock bordered graves, dating back to this time of sorrow for the Rosebud Brule Sioux.

Julia Novak Miller was working for some of the white personnel at Rosebud Agency at this time. She recalls two Indians who approached, from opposite directions, a relatives grave at the crest of a hill. Neither knew of the other's presence -- the hill between them -- until both burst simultaneously, into a wild howl of grief! Each turned as if at a signal, and fled back the way he had come! The corpse had not spoken -- he had howled!

The Messiah Craze in 1889, caused great restlessness and defiance on the part of the Sioux. It was during this disturbance, that a friendly Indian warned the officers at the fort of a planned attack on Rosebud. J. D. Novak again describes the line of blue uniformed men, visible from the Novak home, as resembling a long, low cloud, sweeping northward. An old Indian man stopped in, and, trembling with fear and grief, declared that the soldiers were

"Going to Rosebud to kill all Indians!"

When told the Indians would not be harmed unless they attacked the soldiers or the Agency. The tears rolled down his poor wrinkled face as he faltered,

"Young bucks, they fight! Soldiers kill all!" Then, pointing to himself, he mourned,

"Me not fight. Me good Indian!"

But while the "grapevine" relayed word of the impending attack to the fort, apparently another notified the Brules of the marching army. For again the attack failed to materialize.

Billy had arrived at the agency with a load of freight, unaware of the threatening able and was considerably disturbed at not being allowed to return home that night. Dave Dunn had also brought a load that day and was forbidden to leave the protection of the stockade fence. Two lone men on the road that night, they were told, would be asking for trouble. They were permitted to leave in the morning, as the danger appeared to be over for the time being.

Probably, aggression was prevented on numerous occasions, by a display of military might, often in the form of regular drill. A company of soldiers, stationed at Rosebud, during maneuvers, fired a newly acquired cannon at a large rock on a hillside opposite the drill grounds. To the amusement and unbounded mirth of the troops, an old Indian who had been dozing behind the rock, went, "leaping" "twenty feet at a bound", into the canyon, his blanket flapping behind him at each jump, like a banner in a stiff breeze.

Thomas Fowler's oldest daughter, Leola, later Mrs. John Granger, told of being left with the younger children, who were in bed with measles, while her parents went to Valentine to consult the doctor as to their treatment.

In their absence, the Henry Fowlers and "Grandma" Sayre came to advise immediate removal to the fort, as an unusual number of Indians appeared to be on the move. It was a self-evident fact, however, that the children could not go. Grandma Sayre volunteered to stay with them, declaring she did not believe there was much danger anyway. The rest went on, meeting Tom's on the way home. They had noticed the Indians too, but they all had seemed peaceful and quiet, so refused to panic. They continued on

home to the children. On arriving in Valentine, Henry called the Rosebud Agency, and was told that the Indians had received their pay and been given passes to go to Valentine.

It was the same haunting doubt of anything out of the ordinary for which no immediate explanation was evident, that sent Allison Graeff on a one-man scouting expedition in the night. A sudden wild yelling very like the "tremolo" of the squaws when they accompanied a war party, was too realistic to be ignored! What a relief to discover it was made by a harmless den of coyotes!

It was the same dread uncertainty that prompted Billy Bullis to dig an escape tunnel in the wall of the cellar beneath the house. The rock-filled passage is still very discernible and a grim reminder of those fearfilled days, not a century gone.



Mr. Janssen took his family to town on one occasion, and then returned home, bringing the older stepson, Fred, with him. There in the dimly lit,

shadowy room, he taught Fred to load the muzzle-loading shot guns, measuring the powder and balls on the kitchen table. What a grim, chilling lesson for a young boy!

John Novak was one of those who never left home himself, even when his family spent a week or two in town, during an Indian scare. J. D. tells how his father bolstered his own courage by spending the night beside the table, where he had placed a broken-down muzzle-loader and a tongue breech loader, for which he had no ammunition!

Chapter VIII

The Messiah War

The story of former hostilities between peoples who are now friends, is ever a painful one, and this account, taken in part from Robinson's BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUTH DAKOTA, 1905, will treat briefly of those two trying years.

A Paiute Indian of near Pyramid Lake, Nevada, Wovoka by name, but known to the Whites as Jack Wilson, professed to have had a vision on January 1, 1889. His claim was that he had gone to Heaven, which was a "A pleasant land and full of game". There he was instructed, he said, in a new religion and a dance ritual -- later called the Ghost Dance -- and was told to return to earth and teach them to his people. Whether or not he had a vision -- or dream -- he appeared to have sadly confused his old pagan superstitions with the Christian Faith, taught by the white missionaries.

His instructions were "Goodness, peacefulness and industry". The dance was to be performed once each six weeks, and to last for four days and the night of the fourth day, after which they were to bathe in the lake and return home. Had it ended there, all might have been well. But his fame spread rapidly, and, as is usually the case -- with much exaggeration. To the Sioux, he was the Messiah, the Wanekia to the Ogalalas -- probably meaning the same.

Taking into consideration the restless dissatisfaction of the Indians, it is no wonder the new religion took them by storm. A part of this dissatisfaction was brought about by greedy, unscrupulous agents, who withheld for their own gain, much of the goods issued by the government for their wards, some of whom were in actual want as a consequence. Part was due to the constant agitation and harangue of tribal medicine men, among whom one of the most troublesome was Sitting Bull, whom Robinson's HISTORY

describes as "Of a mean disposition and defiant of government authority",

Pine Ridge Reservation joins the Rosebud Reservation on the west, and extends westward and north to the Dakota Bad Lands. Pine Ridge Indians sent a delegation of three men, headed by Short Bull, to interview and learn of the messiah. Possibly, if one part of his instruction had been omitted, a great deal of trouble had been averted, for it is known now, that the Indians originally meant no harm. But Wovoka's command was to "Tell the White People -- Wasichus -- nothing about this." Too often, as the whites knew, long continued dancing had meant that the Indians were preparing for war, and it was daily becoming more and more constant, frenzied and intense.

Adding to the general confusion, Short Bull claimed to be the special messenger of the messiah. He not only repeated the instructions of Wovoka, but enlarged upon them profusely, inventing numerous additional ceremonies and rituals, among them the sweat-house "for purification". Instead of rest in all weathers, the majority of the Indians devoted their entire time to dancing, in ever increasing persistence.

The white authorities became concerned, and, as conflicting and often mistaken reports were brought them, thought it advisable to break up the dancing. Short Bull and several other leaders were, therefore, placed under arrest. They were released almost immediately, but the Indians were much displeased.

Upon his release, Short Bull boldly proclaimed himself the messiah! He declared that, since the Whites had interfered, he would now bring about the resurrection of the dead and the advent of the new world, to which no hated Wasichus might ever hope to attain, immediately. The Pine Ridge Indians followed him blindly. The religious rites were resumed with increased frenzy and determination, the dancers migrating in ever increasing numbers, to the Bad Lands. Those remaining near the agency were more and more

* White People -- from BLACK ELK SPEAKS

more insolent and defiant of [redacted] [redacted] disturbed, the agent asked military aid. As the [redacted] [redacted] to the [redacted] [redacted] detachments of soldiers were sent to [redacted] [redacted] Ridge and Rosebud Agencies.

An eye witness, residing in Rosebud at the time, told of a party of Brules, on their way to join the dancers, who "took cover" in the canyon and fired volleys [redacted] [redacted] at the stockade fence, apparently aware of the fact that [redacted] [redacted] were forbidden to return the "compliment" unless fired directly [redacted].

In all justice, it must be said [redacted] all Indians wanted trouble. Many were still co-operative and [redacted] order was maintained on the reservations with the splendid, loyal [redacted] [redacted] Indian Police. So, after Major McLaughlin -- who [redacted] [redacted] Bull's agent -- had tried in vain, to keep the old medicine man [redacted] control, without use of force, he was, at last, compelled to order [redacted] [redacted] and sent Indian Police to carry out the mission. (Sitting [redacted] [redacted] preparing to leave the reservation without permission.)

The crafty old Indian, at first, [redacted] [redacted] go peacefully with the police, then suddenly became abusive, and upon stepping out of his house and seeing his warriors near, he called upon them to rescue him! One of the warriors shot and fatally wounded one of the police, who instantly shot Sitting Bull, and the battle was on. The police soon routed the warriors, though more than three times their number -- and carried their dead and wounded into the house, where they held off the attackers until the arrival, two hours later, of Captain Fitchett and his soldiers.

Major McLaughlin reported -- as Robinson's HISTORY states -- that "The details of the battle show that the Indian Police behaved nobly, and exhibited the best of knowledge and bravery. It is hardly possible to praise their conduct too highly."

But Sitting Bull's warriors had gone to join the dancers in the Bad Lands, and it was now feared that the Indians would try to avenge his death. When a new group under Big Foot were reported dancing on the Cheyenne -- near Pine Ridge Agency -- therefore, a troop of soldiers was sent to place them under arrest. The Indians were badly frightened when they saw the soldiers coming, but promised to go quietly with them to the fort. However, during the night, they slipped away and set out for the Bad Lands and the rest.

Soldiers sent in pursuit, overtook them on Wounded Knee Creek. It was now deemed advisable to dis-arm the warriors. Yellow Bird, a medicine-man, harangued the braves, in the Sioux language, urging them to resist. He declared the soldiers were "weakened", and their bullets could not pierce the ghost shirts worn by the Indians.

By the time the officers understood the grave danger of his ranting, he suddenly whipped a rifle from under his blanket and fired at the soldiers fatally injuring an officer.

According to Robinson's HISTORY OF SOUTH DAKOTA, the soldiers were raw, untrained recruits. Possibly more seasoned troops had acted less impetuously. But their indignation can be readily understood at seeing their men thus fired upon without warning. They returned fire, and in the battle that followed, the entire Indian band was destroyed.

With the exception of a few minor skirmishes, the Messiah War was at an end.

A persistent rumor -- or perhaps it might be called a legend -- circulated among the white settlers, of an Indian baby, said to have been found the morning after the battle. The little one was strapped -- according to custom, on the back of her dead mother. The story ran that she was adopted by an Indian tribe and -- born people that they are -- was named "Little Lost Bird".

John G. Weinhardt's BLACK ELK SPEAKS, tells of the finding of two living babies. Black Elk — the "Holy Man of the Ogallalas". himself, claimed to have found one, and a friend of his, the other. Of the little wolf Black Elk discovered, he says,

"I took her to my people," — the Ogallalas — "and they adopted her." So the legend may be assumed to be true.

To make doubly sure hostilities were not resumed, an excursion to the nation's capital, by way of the large cities, was arranged for some of its great chiefs. Julia Miller says,

"It worked!" She recalled one of them stopping at the Novak home later. He sadly opined that the Red Man would never again make war on the Whites, of whom there were such a great number.

"Le La Oone!" was the rueful expression he used.

The arrival of General Nelson A. Miles was also instrumental in cementing the peace. His calm understanding served to soothe ~~flayed~~ nerves of both whites and Indians, and finally, order evolved from chaos.

Chapter IX

Our Friends, The Sioux

When neither Indians nor whites found it longer necessary to fear and mistrust each other, friendships and general good will that, a few years before, would have been impossible, became the rule. For each found in the other much to admire and respect.

Still, the fear had been so deeply imbedded, that each, at times, might give the other a start at which ~~each one~~ laughed over when it was past. Any one who has lived near Indian country in early days, knows of their propensity to enter a house without the formality of knocking. It was therefore not unusual for a housewife to look up from a household task to see one or more unannounced callers, in the room. Or a guttural, "Ugh!" or "How!" might acquaint her with their presence.

Edwin Bohman recalls several of his father -- Fred Bohman's -- reminiscences of that time.

Fred and his brother, Hans, were hoeing potatoes on one occasion when an Indian man drove into the yard and alighted from his wagon. The boys -- not yet too trusting -- hid in the potato patch to see what would happen. The man walked on moccasined feet to the open door, and stood for some time as if uncertain what to do next. Mrs. Janssen sat with her back to the door, paring potatoes for dinner. Finally the Indian touched her lightly on the shoulder. Unaware until that moment, of his presence, she looked up into the dark face, sprang up, screaming, and spilling the potatoes over the floor. He turned quietly away, climbed into his wagon and drove off, his errand still unknown.

On a very cold winter evening, several copper-skinned callers entered suddenly, accepted the proffered chairs silently, or squatted on the floor around the stove. Ignoring their hosts, they conversed in their own tongue, produced clay pipes which they filled with tobacco from leather pouches, tamped it with small wooden blocks they carried, and enjoyed a smoke. When warm, they rose and left, as noiseless and shadowy as they had appeared, and making one wonder whether it had not all been a dream, after all.

During a blizzard a young man, as the Indian man is called, entered, and seated himself beside the fire. He was clad only in moccasins, breechcloth and a blanket draped around his bare shoulders. Probably unable to speak English, he sat silent until warm, then walked forth into the storm.

It was clear and very cold the following morning, and Fred and Hans ran along the creek bank, searching for their caller of the previous night. They fully expected to find him frozen to death. Instead, they found his bed in a wild plum thicket. He had burrowed among the dead leaves and grass just as an animal might have done, covered himself with the

debris and allowed the snow to drift over all. The nest was empty and his footprints led across the snow, toward Valentine.

A middle-aged couple came to the Janssen home, and made known, by signs, that they wished to trade for horses. As they were leaving, the half-wild ponies took fright, something and ran away. The wagon overturned, pinning the luckless couple beneath, and the team ran -- after breaking loose -- until they became tangled in the brush along the creek. Mr. Janssen went to the rescue, released the pair, and then helped them to capture the team and hitch them up again. They clearly showed their pleasure and gratitude for his aid.

A small party -- probably a family -- of Indians, driving along the creek toward town, were compelled to make camp when one of their oxen became sick. As usual, Ned and Hans were intensely interested in proceedings, and missed little of what followed. During the night, the sick ox died, and the human members of the party proceeded to butcher it, without regard for flies and hot weather. They erected a tripod-like frame work and hung the meat in strips to dry; remained until it was all eaten and then hitched up the one remaining ox, and with the Indian boys "encouraging" him along by punching him with sticks, they proceeded toward town.

The wreck of a stock train west of Crookston -- a small town a few miles south-west of North Table -- resulted in the killing of a large number of cattle. Word was sent to the Indians, and like former gold rush days a tent city sprang up almost over night. As long as the meat lasted, there was feasting, dancing and general celebrating. At times the merry-making might grow somewhat vehement, and result in a "free-for-all" battle among the young bloods; some became violently ill from the unaccustomed richness of diet -- toward the last, not in the most to be desired state of preservation -- but all this was an essential part of the jubilee. The sick ones did not, at the time, fully appreciate the situation, they knew as well as the rest, that they would have had the tables been turned. When the supply of free meat was exhausted, they literally "folded their tents like the Arabs, and, as silently, stole away."

Ben Hobson knew that a party of Indians had camped one evening, not far from his buildings. During the night, one of those sudden Nebraska blizzards struck in full fury. The next morning, Ben went to see how his new neighbors had fared, and discovered several squaws and children among the half-frozen group. He invited them into the kitchen of his house for the duration of the storm, his own family using the other rooms. In return for the kindness, they stayed and helped him care for his livestock until the weather had settled.

In contrast to this friendly gesture, Johnny Good-Boy, a young Indian with a small measure of education, formed the habit of coming to the Hobson home and making a general nuisance of himself. An overbearing bully by nature, he made things disagreeable for the Hobson boys who were smaller than he. One day in particular, when Mrs. Hobson felt that she could put up with him no longer, she dispatched one of the younger children with a note to Master Johnny, in which she told him that if he did not leave at once, she would report him to the agency. With a great show of nonchalance, he mounted his pony and rode out of his way to pass a hitching post in the yard. A new lariat rope hung on the post, and a hunting knife had been stuck into the wood to keep it safe. Like most Indians, an expert horse-man, he swept both knife and rope from the post as he galloped past, and rode over the hill, whooping derisively.

An Indian man -- a deaf mute -- came almost daily to Grandfather Bullis' store at Britt and bought a can of peaches, which he would take out behind the store to eat. He became known from the fort to the reservation as "Peaches". If he had another name, it was known to very few if any one.

Government payments to the Indians were made in silver dollars. The pay wagon made the journey from the fort to Rosebud, at first under military escort, later, under guard of Indian Police. When payday rolled around,

the merchant at Rosebud set a wooden barrel at the end of his counter. By evening, it was practically overflowing with silver dollars.

Billy Bullis and Charlie Parker once took a load of watermelons to the agency. Receiving their pay in silver, they put the money into a canvas bag and tossed it into the back of the wagon. On the return trip, the bag wore through, and spilled the contents on the floor of the box. But -- "The box was strong and tight, so why worry?" The happy-go-lucky freighters jogged merrily homeward in the cool of the evening, to the drumming of their horses' feet and the jingle of silver beneath the bouncing spring seat.

The trading habits of the Sioux were as often profitable to the white man as to them. Indeed it was more so in some instances, for, regrettably many whites were not averse to taking advantage of their Red neighbors.

Sign language -- long a means of communication -- is still an essential part of the Red Man's language, and their expressive hands come into play in most of their conversation. J. D. Novak remarked,

"I am convinced, that, should you hold an Indian's hands while he was speaking, he would strangle to death."

Due to government aid, the squaw-man was often better off -- financially -- than his neighbors to the south. According to John Hobson, one of these was first in his community to own an automobile -- an old-fashioned, chain-driven model. He learned to drive it in the excitement of his first venture, he forgot how to use the brakes. Consequently, he drove, not just to his own private farm, but into the very centre of it! The machine stalled there, and, instead of getting out to it and pulling it out, he merely waded ashore, waded back, and purchased another.

The same man, on being asked for a reason for a peculiar three sided roof on his barn, answered that it was so he could sit up there and watch his boys round up cattle -- his neighbor's cattle.

One of these neighbors owned a four mule team, which took the eye

of the squaw man. The mules disappeared, and John, then a young boy, was, some time later at his place. Thinking the mules in the corral looked familiar, he exclaimed,

"Why, didn't know you owned any mules." He did not press the point, however, when the squaw man retorted sharply,

"There's a whole lot of things you don't know, Sonny!"

Our Sioux neighbors have some fascinating customs and traditions, only a few of which can be mentioned here. By nature an idealist, much of his speech is almost pure poetry in its beauty of expression and import. Like most of us, he is superstitious to some extent.

Though owning houses, most of the older generation -- and many of the young ones too -- still prefer their tents and tipis. If they do spend the day in the house, they almost invariably sleep in a tent in the yard. For should one die in the house, it would be unfit to live in again.

According to popular fiction and movies, the smoke signal might be thought to be the only approved method of sending messages. Seldom do we hear of the numerous messages transmitted by means of the flashes from a small mirror held in the hand of an operator on a hilltop or other vantage point. The signal, picked up by a watcher at a distant look-out, is relayed to still another, and so on until it is wide spread, indeed.

A member of the Brule Sioux who lived on the Rosebud between two and three decades ago, explained to the writer that, in Indian territory, even what appeared to the casual observer as the most insignificant of nature's work, has meaning to the Red Man. The arrangement of seemingly scattered stones on a hillside carries a distinct sign for him, and should a careless passer-by dislodge or toss a rock from its place, it or one like it, will be returned to the location before long.

Whether or not such is still the case, it was not an unusual thing,

a few years ago, to come upon what seemed to be a chance-formed rough circle of stones. If interested enough to investigate further, a large, flat stone would be discovered in the center of the circle. Beneath it, so as not to be easily disturbed, one might find several pebbles, a number of sticks, perhaps a buffalo skull or horn or other insignificant articles. Only, they were not so really insignificant. They told a plain story to one who understood this type of sign language.

A Pine Ridge woman spoke to Cherry County teachers at Pre-Opening Day several years ago. She exhibited pottery made by Pine Ridge Indians, from natural colored clays and glazed by their secret formula, tapestries and bead work -- ~~vampum~~ -- that were truly collectors' pieces. A very few of the interesting things she told us are repeated here.

While a few symbols such as the pine tree, flying bird, arrow, sun and eagle appear to be dominant, every line has its own individual meaning. Geometric designs are used to a great extent. But any inclosed, outlined figure -- as a circle, oblong or square -- is certain to have a break in the inclosure somewhere. It may be one thread or one bead, apparently misplaced, and may be difficult to detect on first examination, but, if it is actually the work of an Indian, the flaw is there somewhere. To completely inclose the figure, would be to imprison an evil spirit in the work. Such spirits must have a way of escape.

Neither will the Indian complete an entirely perfect piece of work. There will be a deliberately made flaw, however slight and un-noticeable to the casual glance. It is his belief that, as perfection cannot be attained in this world, his first perfect work will be his last. For with that achievement, he is made ready for eternity. Be assured, that unless there is a flaw in the article, it is merely an imitation of Indian work.

Imitators have, at various times, professed to have discovered the secret glazing formula, mentioned before. But the Pine Ridge lady placed

one such imitation beside its replica in Indian craft. Needless to say, the superiority of the latter was obvious.

The educated Indian is frequently artistic, usually an expert penman, and -- when he takes the trouble to exercise the ability -- possesses an enviable vocabulary, and can tax the wit of the most eloquent paleface to equal him. One who lived on the reservation some twenty or more years ago, had learned along with the rest of his "education", some rather questionable practices. When the agent finally called him in for questioning, he was reported to have defended his actions in a manner that would have done credit to any lawyer.

The late Mrs. Phelps -- a former postmistress at Valentine -- wrote an article for the local newspaper one February. Numerous Indian youths had mailed their valentines at the Valentine post office for the sake of the special post mark she had originated to be used on request for February 14th missives. In her article, Mrs. Phelps told that most of the Indian boys' envelopes bore pen drawings of unusual talent. One, she said, was of a flying bird, and of "Such exquisite beauty and grace of line as to tug at the heart strings."



Mrs. Phelps was a sister of the late Judge Quigley and of Attorney W. B. Quigley, by whose permission the foregoing story is repeated. The Valentine Post Office permitted the use of the postmark.

Chapter X

Wells and Soddies

As wells had to be dug by hand, the majority of the early settlers were obliged, for a while, to haul water in barrels from the nearest supply.

Maude (Melton) Ward recalls that her family hauled water from a well

one half mile north of their homestead. A team of mules was the motive power used, and, true to the nature of the animal, they invariably ran away on the way home, spilled the water and made a second journey to the well necessary.

Mrs. Earl Ladd, Valentine Librarian, remembers her mother tailing of driving a horse and a cow to the mill pond -- three miles distant -- to bring water. The liquid was, indeed, precious under circumstances such as these.

A paper by Joe Novak gave an amusing account of the difficulties of water hauling in those early days.

Jake Martin had left a yoke of oxen with the elder Mr. Novak, permitting their use in return for their care. The first time he hitched them up -- to haul three barrels of water from the creek, a mile and a half distant -- he made a mistake and "yoked the off ox on the high side." It is almost an impossible undertaking to drive oxen on sides to which they are not accustomed.

Joe tried to tell his father he was making a mistake, and writes, "I came near getting slapped for being disrespectful." Consequently an awkward start was made, and it did not improve. The oxen had had no water since the previous morning and were very thirsty. As the odor of the creek came to their nostrils, the obstinate creatures became more and more unmanageable.

Absolutely refusing to be "Geed or hawed", they went their own wilful way over the somewhat hilly, rough terrain toward the creek. Faster and faster they went, finally breaking into a run, leaving Joe and his father far behind. Down over the steepest bank they could find, they plunged, and into the very center of the stream. There the two Novaks found them, standing nearly back-deep in the cool water, slaking their thirst and switching the flies from the exposed backs with wet tails. The wagon box

and barrels floated in the creek, and the running gear lay on its side, just submerged in the clear water. Joe wrote,

"Dad paced up and down on the bank and swore at the oxen in Czech, which they could not understand."

One of the few remaining dug wells still in use, is on the Bullis place and boasts a windmill now instead of the rope and pulley or windlass of former times, as do most of the drilled wells not equipped with electric pumps, or to be used when electricity fails in a storm.

There is an old dug well on the Janssen place which is vacant now, and another, covered with strong planks, on the old Novak place, that is used only for pasture and hay in recent years. J. D. Novak says that well is near one hundred, forty feet deep.

However, most of the unused dug wells have been filled in, as they were a genuine hazard when the places they were on had been vacated. What a hazard they were, Ben Hobson had reason to know. Attempting to drive a herd of young stock in a snow storm, Ben became very cold, and dismounted to walk and lead his horse. The animal objected to facing the storm, and pulled back on the reins, so Ben wrapped them around his hand to prevent their slipping from his numb fingers. A dark spot, that appeared to be bare ground lay before him, and he shouted and jumped upon it, hoping to startle the calves into a burst of speed. Instead of bare ground, the dark spot proved to be an open well. The story would have had a tragic end, had not the faithful horse sensed trouble and leaped backward, literally dragging his master to safety.

Some amusing tales are told too, of these "ancient diggings". It was while Charlie Barker, with the help of a neighbor, was digging the well on his homestead, that the two men got into an argument, with Charlie in the well and Mr. Neighbor at the top. The quarrel became so vehement the neighbor threw his tools down.

"You can stay down there and rot before I'll help you out!" he declared hotly. He turned and started to walk away. But he had not gone far till his conscience began to trouble him, so he stopped to "pass the time of day" with Jim Hull. After a rather unsuccessful try at casual conversation, he remarked that he must get home and do chores. As he started away, he called over his shoulder,

"You better go get Charlie out of that well." Jim exploded,

"What's Charlie doing in the well?"

"I told him he could stay there and rot before I'd get him out, and he can!" retorted the other as he strode rapidly away. Torn between exasperation and amusement, Jim went up and "got Charlie out of the well."

Cats were scarce on the North Table. Consequently there was a plague of rats and mice, especially in the sod buildings, which were a virtual invitation to the vermin. Jim Pettycrew owned one of the two cats on the Table, and Jesse Granger owned the other. With the two, it was hoped to eventually supply the much needed feline population. But in the process of cleaning out the well at one of the places, the top was left temporarily uncovered.

True to her curious nature -- or perhaps exercising her feminine prerogative of vanity, and admiring her reflection in the water -- Pussy teetered on the edge of the casing until she fell in!

Stark tragedy threatened the hoped for rat catchers -- to say nothing of that particular water supply -- until Jesse heroically volunteered to rescue Her Kitty-ship if someone would lower him into the dark abyss. Willing hands operated the windlass, and he brought a sadder and a wiser Pussy from her would-be watery demise.

J. D. Novak's paper describes three types of windlass used in digging the wells:

One was formed of four logs. Two of these were placed upright in the ground, with another across the top. The fourth, extending up from the

center of the cross log, had a circular wooden drum at the top. A pole called a sweep -- about ten feet in length -- reached out from the center pole, and to this a horse was hitched, to pull the sweep in a circle, winding a rope around the drum in this way. One end of the rope was attached to a large wooden bucket which was raised and lowered in the well by the rather complicated contraption. As the bucket rose, it pushed up heavy wooden doors that closed, from the edge to the center of the opening, and between which the rope passed. When the bucket cleared the doors, they dropped back into place and the bucket came to rest upon them.

It was while using this type of windlass, that the elder Mr. Novak had had a narrow escape. He was in the well, and had the big bucket almost filled with dirt and stones, when the horse being used to pull the sweep, became frightened and started to run. The drum revolved rapidly, banged the pail against the doors, throwing them wide open, to crash shut barely in time, for the heavy load thudded upon them at almost the same second, having been released when the rope broke. Miraculously, the doors held, and the badly shaken man below gave the signal to be drawn up. He refused to re-enter the well or allow any one else to do so that night. His thankfulness can be imagined, when, upon looking into the well next morning, he beheld the clear sparkle of water.

Another type of windlass was formed by placing two strong planks upright at opposite sides of the well. Deep notches in the tops of the planks help a tough, slender log, placed across. To this one the rope and bucket were attached. A wooden crank at either end of this cross-wise log, had hand holds of a length to be grasped in both hands. The cranks were opposed (one up while the other was down) thus giving added leverage to the operators, and working much on the order of the old-fashioned hand-car used formerly by section workers on the railroad.

Both of the foregoing contrivances were used in digging the well. The third was used to draw water from the finished product. This one was

a box-like frame work at the surface and extending down into the well for a casing. Like the second one described, two planks upright at opposite sides, supported a third plank or a log, placed crosswise at the top. From the crossbar a pulley hung with a rope passing through, and with a pail tied on each end. As the hand operated rope raised a full bucket, the empty one was lowered into the water and filled.

One of the three kinds of windlass was being used to dig the Sanner well. Jim Hull and John Britt were at the top, with Mr. Sanner in the well. A large rock at the bottom of the excavation was dynamited one evening. Gas was seldom encountered in Nebraska wells, as was the case in some eastern states, but the blast must have driven out the oxygen, for as Mr Sanner was being lowered, he suddenly gave the signal to be drawn back up. Knowing something was wrong, the others complied hastily, but before the lift reached the top, he pitched out and fell to his death.

John Ryschen, the skilled cabinet maker, paid final, loving tribute to his old friend, by building his casket from the precious pieces of walnut lumber he had brought from Iowa when he came west.

A fine, white volcanic ash was frequently found at a depth of fifty or sixty feet, so J. D. Novak says. Settlers' wives used this ash for polishing their silverware, as it was soft and fine, and caused no abrasion.

Also from Mr. Novak's paper this information on the building of sod houses is taken. Sod taken from a blue grass area was preferred, when available. The tough, tangled roots of the blue-grass bound the sod, -- or, more properly speaking, the soil -- firmly together to form sods and prevented disintegration. (Possibly some such formation started the peat bogs in Europe.)

The sod was broken with a breaking plow, in flat strips, slightly more than a foot in width. The strips were cut with spades into blocks

about twice as long as wide and loaded upon a platform wagon to be hauled to the building site.

Sods were laid end to end, grass side down, and the tops shaved with a sharp spade to level them. Alternate layers might be laid crossways to bind the wall, or staggered (like bricks). The side of the wall were shaved also, and the loose dirt used to chink the crevices between sods.

Gently sloping roofs were formed by laying a few logs lengthwise, atop the end walls, cover them with cross logs, and cover these in turn with willows, reeds, or -- a cane farmer might use stalks of cane -- and sod or earth again on top of all. Now and then a board roof was covered with tar paper or building paper, with sod on top.

Incidentally, Mrs. Alice Broad mentioned the numerous cane sorghum mills of early days. That home-made sorghum is one of the "sweetest" memories of early times. No machine made product can hope to compete with the tangy flavor of that made in the old sorghum mills and out-door boiling vats. How the children -- un-used to sweet treats as children of today are -- looked forward to the boiling down of the syrupy cane juice. Dads whittled wooden paddles for each child, which were dipped and "turned" in the thick rich sorghum, and given into eager, waiting little hands. Faces, hands and clothes would be a sticky mess, but the paddles would be licked clean indeed.

Brown sugar was another product of the cane, and was sold, Mrs. Broad says, at one dollar for a large bag.

To return to the sod house, figuratively speaking, a native unslaked and unprocessed lime was mixed with sand to produce a grayish plaster of fair quality and the inside of most sod houses was finished with this.

Dry Creek School was first held in an abandoned farm house on the bank of the creek. It was known as the Bogey House, and no doubt, some reluctant little urchins thought it well named. Later, a good sized sod house was built for the purpose. Desks were home-made benches with

lower shelves for books, the seats, merely lower benches. The teacher's desk was a home-made table with book shelf, and this table was painted white. Her throne was a kitchen chair.

But cattle rubbing against the corners of the building wore them away to such an extent that the entire structure seemed due to collapse at a moment's notice.

The patrons of the district petitioned the board to call a meeting to raise money -- or to bond the district for that purpose -- and a new school house was begun. While Valentine carpenters, Jim Longland and Harry Hilsinger were building it, school was held in a cabin, owned by a Mrs. Utterback, across the road to the south of the one under construction. The school-house built at the time, still stands -- at the south edge of the Bullis pasture. The building has been stuccoed, and boasts a full width entry, with cement floor, at the south end of the main building. School has been held every year but two, when a teacher was not available.

Factory made desks for teacher and pupils were installed in the new building, besides a swivel chair for "teacher".

As related in George Sanner's paper, Sunday School was held in the school house a few summers -- as it has at various times since. Cora Bullis' old secretary book records these names of officers, teachers and members:

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Superintendent ----- | Henry Fowler |
| Ass't Superintendent ----- | Wm F. Bullis |
| | Jennie Fowler |
| Teachers ----- | Cora Bullis |
| | Maggie Brown |
| Librarian ----- | James Novak |

Register of members included:

Arthur and Mrs. Brown; Roy, Albert, Pearl and Willie Brown; Henry and Jennie Fowler; Freddie Fowler; Wm. and Cora Bullis; Rudolph Bullis; Anna and George Sanner; James Novak; Willie Dunn; Mary, Josie and

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County Treasurer of Berry County.

G. P. CRAIG, Treasurer

Quentin, Feb. 28 1876

What is the Penalty for
 a 1/2 Welsh dog tax on
 £4 83 35 28 and the
 one year school was graduated
 to school 24 to 26 and
 the same should of went to
 school but on 12 amount
 was £4 67 8 1/2
 E. Green

Bertha Ryschen, George, Lizzie, Willie, Mary and John Janssen, Gussie Graeff.

On another page the date of organization is given as July 13, 1902. The little record book with its marbelized covers, was copyrighted in 1897 by the Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Company of Boston and Chicago.

Among other receipted bills dating back to 1896 and 1897, was one from American Book Company, dated Sept. 28, 1897 to Dir. H. C. Sanner, for:

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|--------|
| 6 Barnes New Nat'l First Readers at | 16¢ ---- | \$.96 |
| 4 Barnes Elem. Geographies | 44¢ ---- | 1.76 |
| 2 Lang Language Lessons Part 1 | 15¢ ---- | .30 |
| 2 " " " " 2 | 19¢ ---- | .38 |
| 3 Harvey's Elem. Grammars | 32¢ ---- | .96 |
| 1 Ray's New Fraction Arithmetic | | .38 |
| Total | | \$4.74 |

Via C. N. W. R. R.

What a contrast to present day costs of school supplies!

Another receipted bill from American School Furniture Company, of Nov. 8, 1899 -- probably for the factory made furniture -- to the amount of \$66.00! From all reports, there were about thirty pupils to buy desks desks for at the time.

Among the Valentine Firms whose names appeared on the business papers were: W. A. Pettycrew and George W. Hornby, while an order of 1897 is signed by: Dir. H. C. Sanner, Mod. J. S. Kalbfinger and Treas. D. D. Dunn.

Pupils' names for that early period were not at the school house. Later rolls show: Rudolph Bullis; Frank Ryschen; Frank, Edward and Inez Brown; Mildred and Merle Ayers, Adolph and Anna Schmidt; Florence, Agnes and Mabel Killinger; Elsie Kellogg (a daughter of Dewey and Etta Miller Kellogg); Leon Miller and Gussie Howard. The name of Bessie Green (Mrs. John Hobson) was on the next year's roll.

Teachers' names included: Alta Eddenfield (later Mrs. Merton Bryant); and Marcella Mundorf (Mrs. Hardin Van Metre).

A visitors' list included: Ethel Fowler (Mrs. Lloyd Pierce); Hardin Van Metre; Earl Mundorf; Frank Hobson and Josephine Overman, -- all old familiar names.

Chapter XI

Neighborliness

Mention has been made of the kindness and sympathy with which neighbors hastened to the house of trouble to extend all possible comfort and aid. It was the gentle hands of neighbors that cared for the sick and injured, or prepared the dead for burial.

It was an older pupil who picked up little Luella Graeff after the sad accident that took her life. Joe Ryschon tells us he found and lifted her from the rocky ground where she was thrown from the cart. Billy and Cora Bullis were among those who comforted with the stricken family that night.

Mrs. Dave Dunn, Mrs. Otto W. Hahn and Mrs. Ben Hobson had taken turns at the bedside of Mrs. Miller during her illness. Mrs. Hobson and Mrs. Hahn both professed to have heard "death bells" -- a peculiar ringing in their ears -- one morning. They went together to the Miller home, and found that she had just passed away.

Several men were helping Dave Dunn with a new building when someone brought the word. Mr. Dunn quietly put down his tools.

"No more work, boys," he said, "we must help lay the poor lady away."

A young son of William Brookes was herding cows for his father. His riderless horse's arrival one evening set off a search that soon discovered the child where he had fallen or was thrown from the horse. Again, it was loving hands of neighbors that prepared the broken little body for its rest.

Happily, however, neighborly helpfulness was not confined to heart-breaking scenes such as these. John Hobson recounts a tale of his father's

diplomacy in helping a friend find several calves he was certain had been stolen. The suspected man was known to be "quick with his gun", so Ben dropped in casually, near the noon hour. He was received hospitably and invited to stay to dinner. He rose after dinner, presumably to go home, and his host accompanied him outdoors. Ben maneuvered near the barn, and at a plaintive "Ma-a", he exclaimed,

"Why, you got calves shut up at this time of day?" The other called sharply,

"Don't open that door!" But the door was already open.

"Why, I know these calves." Ben exclaimed, as if he thought they had strayed there and been shut up for the owner to claim. "I might as well drive them along as I go home." The two locked glances for a moment, and the other dropped his eyes,

"Do you have to look after all your neighbors, Ben?" He asked.

Nor was it only North Table Folks themselves who showed kindness in those trying days of "empire building". The loss of a large number of cattle in the corn-stalks broke Mr. Hobson. He tested the helpfulness of his banker, who responded nobly. The Cornell Bank advanced him funds to stock up with Shorthorn cattle and Poland China hogs. With the timely aid, he was eventually able to pay off the debt.

Mrs. Henry Jackson tells how John Jackson Sr. and several of his neighbors -- none of them having enough money to buy needed farm implements -- put their funds together and bought a lister, which they used by turns, three days apiece.

More often than not, after Sunday School, the group gathered at one home or another, for a social afternoon and evening. At such times the cows might be driven in early and milked to make ice-cream. For all worked together in the winter to fill the ice caves with ice from the creek for just such occasions.

As remarked in a previous chapter, these gatherings were frequently at Hobson's. There might, at times, be a lack of variety on the table, but there was no lack of hospitality and genuine good will, which counted for more than abundance of food. John told of a little boy whom his mother observed looking anxiously over the table one evening. On being asked what he was looking for, he replied.

"I'm lookin' for something for Pa. He don't eat beans."

A stranger wandered in at one such gathering on a Sunday night. As usual he was made welcome, stayed to supper and was invited to spend the night. He rose very early next morning, asked for his bill, and upon being told there was no bill, he left, before breakfast. He went to the Hahn's whom he told that, when he stayed over at a celebration, he always made a point of leaving early.

Another of John's memories is of the wedding reception for one of his sisters. His own sisters and a sister of the groom -- solicitous that the guests should be well fed, cooked kettle after kettle of beans, until Mrs. Hobson declared there was nothing in the house large enough to hold them. John says,

"Frank and I, outdoors, saw Mother come slyly to the door, a time or two and toss out a kettle of beans." Mr. Hobson was kept busy with his guests the day of the wedding, leaving the care of the live-stock to the boys. Consequently, dinner was over when the two finally came to the house. John recalls,

"Frank and I sat across from each other, and now and then, one or the other called out,

"Grab a bean!" and flipped ~~one~~ across the room.

A storm prevented many of the guests from going home that evening -- some remaining at Hobson's and neighbors opened their doors to others. During the night, a number of the stranded guests were ill. Consequently,

they began putting two and two together and adding it up to two mischievous boys!

"Hadn't they stayed out until everyone else had eaten dinner? And how persistently they had clowned with those beans! It just meant that they had somehow managed to "doctor" the beans beforehand!" John declared,

"I swear we hadn't touched the beans, but we couldn't make anyone believe us."

As is always the case, some of the Sunday get-togethers did not end happily. On one occasion, the Fowler and Granger boys decided to leave the older folk to their visiting and go hunting prairie chickens. They cou'd sell the game in town and have a little spending money.

But that fateful day, a gun stock slipped through a crack in the floor of the buck-board, and in the effort to pull it back up, it was accidentally discharged, killing one of the Granger brothers.

The grief-stricken father forbade anyone to so much as touch a gun on Sunday in that house. When, years later, O. D. Hahn unearthed with his plow, a box of cartridges, stamped with the date, 1879, it was believed that poor Mr. Granger had gone a step further and buried from sight, any reminder of the tragedy. Obviously it was some of the ammunition issued the settlers from the fort.

As we have seen, the school-house was -- and still is -- a community center. Sunday Schools, an occasional Revival series of meetings, programs, suppers, literaries -- or lyceums, as they were sometimes called -- debating contests and general social affairs were held in the school-house, and how they were looked forward to and enjoyed! Some of us old-fashioned folk still appreciate a school program above any other form of entertainment.

At the literary meetings, a committee was appointed to edit a newspaper for the next meeting. Such papers were a series of jokes and sly

allusions to local love affairs, activities or other items of interest to the community.

One such paper, dating back to 1901, and read at a literary at Harmony, was discovered by Edith Lurz, and furnished these items:

"Locals"

Mrs. T. P. Spratt and Miss Bessie Eaton have started in the chicken business. They are reported to have some very nice ones.

Our fellow citizen, H. Jaycox, must have met with quite a loss lately. We notice that he goes without his fur cap and whiskers. We extend our sympathy.

Myron Cogswell says it is fashionable to wear a six inch collar on a four inch neck.

Wanted: A few more dogs! By Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Harper.

Aaron Salmon has moved to the country -- on North Table.

Hark! Did you hear a crash as of broken glass? O. W. Hahn had his picture taken -- now the camera is being repaired.

As soon as the machine is repaired, Fish Pettycrew intends to smile and look pretty as he gets his face "taken".

Alice Fowler -- "I wouldn't marry the best man on earth."

Rena Marshall -- "You couldn't. I have him".

Earl Riggle was present at the last social at Harmony.

Wanted: To get even with Aaron Salmon.

Mabel E. Hahn.

April 28, 1901 -- The home of B. F. Hobson rejoiced over the arrival of a tiny little guest. The all-important task of selecting a name was given to Mary and Lizzie. After due thought, they decided to call her: Ione, Evangeline, Clementine, Salmontine, Taylortine Hobson. If anyone feels left out, they may attach something else.

A self-appointed committee investigated the terrible moans and groans that had been heard for some time at the Crabb home. The matter proved to be nothing more serious than Ralph, balancing up his assessor's books.

A rumor has been going round that C. M. Van Metre killed a panther a short time ago. Investigation proved the monster to have been only a badger, however.

New hired man: -- "I didn't know that you kept mules, Mr. Hobson."

Ben: -- "I do not! The noise you hear is not a mule braying, but Myron Coggsell singing in his farmyard."

Why does Earl Riggie always get Miss Hahn at the socials?

Mary Hobson: -- "I see a team and wagon coming up the road."

Lizzie: -- "Oh, that sounds 'Fishy' to me!"

At one such social evening, Mrs. George Austin, then teaching at Harmony, observed her younger sister, Frances Harper, exchange side-long glances with young Matt Van Metre. Frances, telling the story at an old settlers' gathering years later, laughed,

"When we got home, Florence shook her finger under my nose and said,

"Now no flirting, young lady! That boy means business!" Obviously

he did. It was not long until a pretty wedding took place at Harmony.

Etta Miller and her pupils gave a program at Dry Creek School, and finished it off dramatically with her marriage to Dewey Kellogg.

Eliza Hobson Bunker informed us that her sister, Mary, the first of the Hobson sisters to wed, exchanged vows with Charles Salmon on her father's front porch in 1905. The one hundred fifty guests viewed the pretty scene from the lawn. Several of the other sisters, including Eliza herself, were married in the sod school house at Harmony.

Otis D. Hahn and Florence Shelbourn were married in the house that is their present home. Billy and Cora Bullis attended the reception, and Cora was afterward heard to remark that ,

"Otey and Florence were one of the finest looking couples she had seen."

Fourth of July celebrations and picnics were happy events. Billy, recalling the first one he attended in Cherry County, recalled its being held at Fort N'obrara where a military band and a sham battle were featured. The crowning event, however, was the performance of an officer who rode his horse to the top of Frederick's Peak. This mount rises, steep and high, from Minnechaduza Canyon. Almost perpendicular toward the top, the sides are of loose, shaly stone to a large extent. Added to this, the officer carried a large flag. When the ascent was completed -- which took most of the July day -- and Old Glory was planted triumphantly at the summit, the bugle trilled and the cannon boomed its salute.

At an Independence Day celebration at the present Bullis home, in early days, a small trained mule or burro, that was to have furnished part of the entertainment, vanished. After a lengthy search, he was discovered in a near-by corn field. The stalks -- on July fourth -- were tall enough to completely hide the little animal.

Finally, a combination picnic and fair became an annual event. It was held in a grove west of the Hahn homestead. Otis D. says that the exhibits of farm and garden produce, as well as domestic animals could easily rival our modern county fairs. The elder Mr. Hahn was one of the few who raised



Military Band at old Fort Niobrara. By Permission



Frederick's Peak. Permission of Mark Flynn

fine horses at the time.

These affairs came to be known as Old-Settlers'- Picnics. In recent years, they have been held at Sparks -- fifteen or twenty miles east of the first location. They also include a much larger area now.

It was during one such picnic that the boys chose sides and played the usual base-ball game. Elderly Mr. Miller umpired. Otis D., making a wild rush "home", crossed the plate, and circling to halt, collided with Mr. Miller, almost upsetting that gentleman. Otey tells how severely he was reprimanded by his father for "showing so little respect to an old man and a soldier, too."

The Hobson family called for a social evening, at Grandfather Bullis' on one occasion. The young men of the two families produced a pack of playing cards and began a game around the kitchen table. Puritanical Grandmother Bullis voiced her disapproval of cards. Mrs. Hobson assured her that all would be friendly and in fun. She remarked,

"Our boys never quarrel over cards."

She had scarcely finished speaking when chairs scraped backward, and two young players faced each other across the table -- eyes flashing and fists clenched. Grandmother acted promptly; the cards met a fiery fate in the kitchen stove; Grandmother's ultimatum,

"No more cards in this house!" met with no opposition.

The wedding record of this narrative would be incomplete without John Bullis' and Lucilla Stinard's romance. John, his sister, Nellie, and Lucilla all attended high school in Valentine.

Lucilla was the attractive daughter of David Stinard, who had, in 1884, pre-empted a claim, and later filed on a homestead east of Fort Niobrara. Here he operated a store as well as a farm where he raised both horses and cattle until 1893. Thereafter he owned a clothing store in Valentine.

By graduation time, John and Lucilla's friendship had grown and sweet-

ened into an engagement. A year later they were married.

It was John's ambition to become an undertaker. So he procured a set of text books and continued to study, while Lucilla, knowing his earnings would not, at first, permit of a hired assistant, studied with him, to be able to lend a hand when necessary.

Alas! Grandmother discovered the text books and was scandalized at the illustrations. The books met the same ignominious fate as the playing cards of a few years previous.

John was evidently composed of the same mettle as his mother. He promptly secured another supply of texts -- only to have them follow in the wake of the first ones.

Whether he finally convinced her that he was no longer a little boy, and subject to her will, or whether he and Lucilla kept the third set of books under lock and key, is not quite clear. But the course was at least completed, and John set up shop in the Red Front Building in Valentine.

All early love affairs did not end in fairy-tale style, though. Eric Anderson saved the thirty dollars -- in those days, sufficient for a passage from Sweden to America -- to bring his fiancée across the Atlantic. Then he discovered that the fickle lady had wearied of waiting and had wed his rival.

Eric promptly bought a gun with his thirty dollars -- not to shoot himself, but as he declared, it was more valuable to him any way.

Chapter XII

Fires, Blizzards and Drouth

As has been stated, prairie fires were a constant menace to this prairie land. They are, even down to the present -- more than one hundred years after the Homestead Act. Descendants of the homesteaders whose names are listed here, as well as later comers still scan the horizon for a tell-tale puff of smoke, and neighbors from near and far speed to the scene

when it appears, armed with shovels, plows, wet sacks and spray pumps. Now rural fire departments from near-by towns join in the defense operation, and often airplanes circle above and direct fire-fighters on the ground. Even so, the loss of property by prairie fire is of startling proportion each year. Not only is this area dry -- weather wise -- but it is now far more thinly settled than in early homestead days, when, to quote Joe Ryschon, every quarter section boasted a claim shack. Much of the formerly cultivated land has been allowed to "go back" to grassy sod, as it has proved to be of greater value as grazing land or for hay production than for crop growing. Other fields are "seeded down" to perennial hay crops, like alfalfa, vetch, wheat grass or sweet clover. In late summer and autumn the country is dotted with hay stacks -- baled or loose stacked. These stacks actually appear to "draw" lightning, and autumn with its severe electric storms is an anxious period for all. While the present day Indian will co-operate nobly in the fire-fighting task, he is likely to keep out of sight when the fire was set by lightning. Such a blaze is the Will of God to him.

In early days, the Indian had the habit of burning off the reservation each fall or winter. W. R. Brown declares that a crawling snake was visible at from three to four hundred yards distance on the burned over sod.

The old fire-guards are still discernible, along much of the state line, as well as at intervals throughout the Table land. The usual fire-guard consisted of two parallel furrows, a few rods apart between which the grass was kept burned off. Even during a strong wind -- an invariable result of fire -- constant vigilance and beating of chance flares along the edge of the guard, is usually sufficient to check the advance of the flames.

Julia Miller's letter alleges that her mother, little brother and

herself were at home alone about 1890, when a huge prairie fire swept down toward them. She says:

"A small fire-guard and our own efforts saved our home."

Such experiences were a common occurrence. Billy Bullis recalled a grass fire, driven by a brisk wind, that approached too rapidly for him to do much toward protecting his property, and seemed certain to destroy his claim shack -- at that time, the only building on his place. Helpless to check its advance, he tossed a match into the grass and took his stand on the burned over space while watching the rushing flames approach.

Imagine his astonishment when the crackling fire swept harmlessly beneath his "house on stilts" and passed on without even singeing the boards! For once, a high wind served a good purpose.

Mrs. Ladd's mother noted that even wash waters were saved carefully for fire emergency. Many a building was saved by keeping the boards wet by throwing water against them.

Mary Bryant's story of her mother's pioneer experiences, emphasizes the battle with prairie fires in fall and spring, with drouth and grasshoppers in summer and blizzards in winter. The strength of purpose displayed by those unconquerable Old-Timers, in the face of unceasing odds, is indeed inspiration and worthy of admiration.

There is nothing more terrifying than the sight of a leaping, searing wall of flame, wind-driven, bearing down upon one's possessions or home. Obscured by rolling smoke one moment -- when next visible, so far advanced during even that brief interval -- the impulse to flee in blind panic is almost overwhelming. Never is a neighbor's unfailing assistance more appreciated than in the fight with such a foe, and never can one count more confidently upon such assistance, for it is an unwritten code of the Plainsman.

Equally awesome are the approaching blizzard or tornado -- though the

former often strikes so suddenly, one does not note its approach. Now, however, with daily newspapers, radio and telephones, there is generally some warning.

Providentially, the tornado is the least frequent and less far-reaching than either fire or blizzard. In such event, a cave is the best protection, though comparatively few ever resort there. Not that such act is considered to show fear. On the contrary, those most averse to seeking the safety of a cave, will probably be the first to call any other action foolhardy. As it was during Indian trouble the inclination to "stay with the ship" -- or the urge to see what happens -- outweighs any other, as a rule. So the place of refuge is frequently avoided until too late. Mrs. Alice Broad related how she had arrived at the store and Post Office at Britt just as a funnel shaped cloud appeared, and how Grandmother Bullis and she retreated to the storm cellar.

The blizzard of 1888 has gone down in history as the worst ever known in Northern Nebraska. Farther east, it became known as "The School Children's Blizzard", because many children perished or were badly frozen on the way from school. But in this part of the state, it struck before time for school to begin, or for many to have left home for any reason. There was no report of casualty, although several near-tragedies occurred.

As is so often the case, the day broke fair and sunny, with no hint of approaching storm. Otis D. Hahn and J. D. Novak tell very similar tales of that never-to-be-forgotten day.

Otis' father, C. W. Hahn, decided, as the day was so pleasant, to go to the canyon for wood. On going to the barn to harness the horses, he found a young calf that had arrived during the night. While preparing a bed of straw in a warm stall for the new-comer, he was startled by a sudden chill in the air, and the total disappearance of the bar of sun-light that had been pouring through the small window.

Going to the door, he looked forth into a seemingly impenetrable white wall of snow. He wrapped the calf in his coat, and set out to carry it to the house, facing into the storm to do so. Blinded and half smothered by the gale-driven snow, he by-passed the house, and it was not until he stumbled and fell over a log that he got his bearings and turned back. Colliding with a corner of the house, he felt his way around it to the door. His life had surely been saved by that fall over a log.

John Novak, also, was just finishing the morning feeding and caring for livestock in the barn when the storm struck in full fury.

The barn was approximately six rods west of the house. A clothes-line extended southward from a corner of the house to a pole near the road, also a few rods from the house. In the short distance between barn and house, he lost his way until he bumped into the clothes-line pole. He took hold of the wire line, and followed it to the house.

A shipwrecked sailor on an uninhabited island could scarcely feel more lonely and abandoned than some one stranded by a blizzard. The cold that penetrates the tightest wall; the fine, stinging snow that finds and sifts inexorably through the tiniest crack or minutest nail-hole to pile up with incredible speed; The inability to see anything but a white barrier that appears to be relentlessly closing one into a narrow icy tomb; the shrieking howl of the wind, combined with the hiss and rattle of frozen pellets of snow, all join with barometric extremes to threaten one's reason.

Charlie Bullis was spending the winter with Billy and Cora in their claim shack. The young man yielded to an uncontrollable desire for the cheery companionship of his young friends in the Kalblinger home, a half mile to the south. He set out bravely in the storm, but missed the Kalblinger's, likewise the Dunn buildings three quarters of a mile farther south, and was finally halted against a fence. Following it,

he reached a barn of sod, in which he gratefully took refuge, with a team of horses that supplied some degree of warmth.

Allison Graeff had gone to the Dunn residence on some errand that morning. When the storm hit, Dave urged him to remain until it was over. However, he felt the necessity to be at home to care for things there. So he started out. A half hour later, Dave heard a muffled hail through the storm. He went to the door and answered, and Allison's voice queried,

"Where am I?" Wandering in a circle, he had returned to his starting place. Dave guided him back into the house where he remained until the storm had spent itself.

Walking the three quarters of a mile home, he noted the big drift before the door, and resolved to see about the animals in the barn before attempting the entrance into the house. Fancy his astonishment at finding a drowsy, cold young man huddled in the stall with the horses!

They were obliged to climb over a drift as tall as the house to gain entrance.

Had Charlie missed these buildings, he would have travelled miles to reach any others -- had he lived to travel, which is highly improbable.

John Jackson Sr., freighting to Rosebud, several days after the storm, saw two hundred head of cattle in a ravine. Standing deep in snow that was slowly thawing away from them, only their horns and heads were visible above the drifts.

The drought of 1894-95 was equally drastic, and many settlers were forced to give up and leave. If their neighbors were able to buy their animals and equipment for a fraction of their worth, well and good. The small amount they brought helped finance the migration -- usually back to their former homes. In some cases, however, they were unable even to give away the livestock. Not only did others not have money to buy them, they had neither grain nor forage to feed them.

Otis Hahn recalls,

"We children, going barefoot, stepped -- not from one grassy spot to another, but from one spot of bare ground to another, to avoid cactus."

The Sand Hills, visible to the south of the Niobrara River, were not the beautiful green they are today, but gleaming white dunes of drifting sand. The excellent hay and grazing qualities of those multiple grassed hills and rich valleys, dotted with lakes, is verily a dream come true in these later years.

Julia Miller wrote of the drive of Texas cattle -- Long Horns -- in the hope that the long slow drive over clean range, would free them of Texas fever. This took place in 1884 or 1885. Instead of curing the infected cattle, however, they contaminated range and herds all along the route. Crossing North Table they practically wiped out the few stock the settlers had accumulated. Many ranchers, too, were ruined by that fateful experiment, for wherever the ailing cattle went, the range was polluted, and entire herds took the disease and died.

Again in the thirties, there were some who left Nebraska as well as other Midwestern states, because of the drouth. But, as a rule, the Old-Timers "stuck". Such extremes in weather conditions bring hardship and difficulty but it is doubtful whether any who stayed regret having done so.

During the drouth years in the nineties, when the Jones family were preparing to leave, Billy Novak stayed with the young men of the family in this house for a short time. He tells how, to pass the long evenings, the boys used the east door for target practice, while sitting in the other end of the house. The old door still bears the "battle scars."

John Ryschen Jr. rode in one afternoon also, and Bill, intending just to startle his friend, fired into the ground beside his foot. Whether his aim was not exact or whether John moved, neither knew, but the bullet just "nicked" John's toe. While he hopped on one foot, holding the other in his hands, and shouted that he was shot, Bill mounted his horse and

and fled, staying out of sight until things had time to quiet down.

Another of Leola Fowler Granger's tales of her girlhood on North Table is the account of her again being left in charge of the younger children while her parents went to the canyon for wood. Toward evening, when she looked out the window in the hope of seeing them returning, she beheld, instead, a large herd of Longhorn cattle being driven through Government Canyon to the reservation. One rider had separated from the others and was galloping recklessly through brush and undergrowth directly toward the house. Leola latched the door when he literally tumbled from his horse, and too intoxicated to walk, crawled on hands and knees to the house. She opened it again when he demanded admittance, and reached toward the gun at his belt.

He demanded supper "now!" On the pretense of sending the younger children to gather fuel, Leola whispered to them to hide in the corn and wait for her. Her caller showed signs of impatience, so, remarking that she might get the fuel quicker, she slipped out and dragged a boiler full of rain water against the door. She ran into the corn and with the other children, ran to a neighbor's, not far distant. Bob Stower, the neighbor's son was mounted to turn back any of the cattle that might stray from the herd, and, like a knight of old, he now rode forth to meet the "dragon" whom they saw, -- again on his horse -- approaching along the road. Promising to take him where he could get supper, Young Stower led him to where the riders were already making camp.

The efficient fellows promptly tied up their inebriated pal until he should again become his usual well-behaved, gentlemanly self.

Chapter XIII

Earning a Livelihood

Many were the means resorted to for earning a few extra dollars for new shoes, a new coat or dress, school supplies for the children or much needed blankets for winter warmth.

One method was gathering bones on the prairie, which were sold for four dollars a ton to a dealer in town. When he had enough to fill a railroad car -- "spotted" for the purpose, on a back-track -- they were shipped east to be ground for fertilizer.

Billy Bullis and a friend were engaged in this occupation, when Billy was astonished to find several dollars in coins of smaller denomination, scattered in the grass.

Mystified, the two began a careful search for a solution to the mystery and soon realized that the bones in that particular area, were of a different size and form than others they had been collecting.. Before the afternoon drew to a close, they had found and assembled an almost complete skeleton-- a human skeleton.

They divided the silver between them, and made a small bin in a corner of the wagon box to keep the human bones separate from the others. At the railroad, next morning, Billy asked the dealer what was to be done with them. The man exclaimed,

"They're bones, aren't they? Throw them into the car!"

Into the car they went. (It might be interesting to know whose bones fertilized whose field.)

Nearly all the men drove freight wagons at one time or another. As a rule these were small, privately owned outfits, consisting of one or two wagons and two or four horses, mules or oxen. Usually two men worked together, but now and then one travelled alone.

These smaller outfits, commonly freighted the shorter routes. From Valentine or Fort Niobrara to Rosebud being the one generally travelled

by North Table freighters. Of those engaged in the freighting business at various times were: Matt Van Metre, Ralph Crabb, Dave Dunn, Charles Barker, Joe Kalblinger, John Jackson, Arthur Brown and Billy Bullis, among others. In later years, Joe and Frank Ryschon freighted to quite an extent. Pete Lower and Jake Martin having large outfits, freighted much longer routes. The large freighting companies often hired men who owned several teams or yoke of oxen, to be a part of their trains.

One such expedition, travelling from Rushville, Nebraska, to Fort Robinson -- in the northwestern part of the state -- furnishes us with a typical tale of early day adventure. Though the route was outside the territory with which we are dealing, several residents of North Table played leading roles in the drama.

The story was told by a former North Table dweller, who was a boy of about fifteen at the time. He had been hired as ox herder for the outfit -- a large consolidated ox-team freighting outfit. He rode horse-back and herded along the extra oxen when the wagons were travelling light or empty. The drivers, of whom there were fourteen, took turns at night herding, so the boy could rest. (Keeping track of forty seven yoke of oxen at night was a big responsibility for boy or man.) One of the drivers was also a North Table man.

The train loaded at Rushville for Fort Robinson. The cargo was for the most part, feed grain for cavalry horses at the western fort. The first half of the trip was uneventful, and nine days from starting time, the train was back -- empty -- as far as Day Springs. Then things began to happen.

The North Table driver left the camp that evening and went into town, where two friendly(?) confidence men invited him to take a hand in a little game. They treated him to spiked refreshments, and when he returned to camp -- accompanied by his new acquaintances -- he allowed them to take two yoke of his best oxen back to town with them.

He crept under his wagon and slept off the effects of the doped liquor. Upon awakening, he lapsed into a fit of despondence for his folly and the loss of his oxen, while his companions joked him unmercifully.

Finally he announced that he was going into town and get those ~~steers~~? At the change of attitude, the other drivers -- to a man -- pledged him their backing. They enlisted the aid of local men, even the homesteaders from the surrounding hills, all ready and eager to help. (Perhaps others, too, had been victims of the gamblers' chicanery.) It looked as if a battle might ensue. Rifles and shotguns were cleaned and oiled; ammunition collected and distributed among the small army.

They took their positions behind box-cars, piles of lumber or railroad ties, or whatever protection offered, and waited. The driver took the young herder with him; walked boldly to where the oxen were tethered and pulled two stakes. Then he told the boy to take them back to camp.

The back door of the saloon burst open, and a number of men ran out. "Kid, get away from those steers!" One shouted.

The driver raised his rifle,

"Get back into that saloon if you don't want your light blown out!"

As if by magic, cars, fences and barricades of all kinds fairly bristled with fire-arms. In telling the story, the herder wrote,

"I looked back and those fellows were all trying to get in at that door at once."

No opposition was encountered in reclaiming the second yoke of oxen.

But a conference held at camp that evening, resulted in the boy and his employer setting out -- not by the road, but by a winding round-about way across the trackless prairie -- that night. For the general opinion was, that should the crooks procure fast horses and overtake them, neither life would be spared. The men remaining in camp, kept watch until the pair were out of sight, after which they were on their

The driver took up his station in the rear wagon, facing backward, behind a breastwork of wooden boxes, blocks and bed-rolls. The boy drove, with instructions -- should there be trouble -- to

"Get onto the lead wagon tongue, just back of the wheelers!"

During the night he frequently cracked the blacksnake whip, to assure the man at the rear of his wakefulness.

They breakfasted at a homesteaders soddy and allowed the oxen to graze for a couple of hours. But -- not yet out of danger -- they soon took up the flight. They passed a group of three sod cabins, each built on a corner of the owner's claim, but close together for protection, for neighbors were distant.

They were hungry, and knew the oxen were too, but feared to make camp again and waste precious time.

But that night, in the darkness, they drove into a blind canyon pocket and the trail wagon turned upside down at the bottom of the ravine, with most of their equipment and all their supplies beneath.

Little by little, with the aid of a long rope and by hitching and re-hitching each time the wagon was moved a few feet -- so as to change the position of the rope -- they finally got it back on its wheels and out of the narrow crevasse just at day-break.

However they discovered a clear, cool, spring fed creek that they had surely missed had they continued in the darkness. So once more they rested a few hours, and allowed the oxen as well as themselves to be refreshed.

Resuming their journey, they headed for the Red Cloud Agency to replenish their food supply, but were disturbed by the sight of Indians in full war regalia, also going toward Red Cloud. A few miles out, they were met by a friendly half-breed and a white man, who warned them to

"Stay away from the agency! The Indians are ugly."

The fault apparently lay with a dishonest agent, who had been cheating his charges out of their government issued supplies. It was several months later that they learned how the half-breed had held a pow-wow with the chiefs and persuaded them to delay hostilities until a delegation could be sent to Washington. The breed was one of the delegation, and as a consequence of his understanding of the situation, the agent was relieved of his post, and affairs once more settled onto peaceful routine.

The weary travellers finally arrived at the Bonser Ranch, northwest of Rosebud, turned all the oxen except the wheelers out on the range, and following a two day rest, finished their journey home.

A letter from Joe Novak to his sister, Mrs. Julia Miller, also reveals the hardships of those times -- for children as well, if not actually more -- than their elders. A part of that letter reads:

"I'll try to write a few lines about the old times in the early 80's and maybe you will recall some of them as I have written them. No doubt a great many of these happenings have slipped from your mind, as they have from mine, but some of them I'll never forget.

"You asked me to write something about the time I worked for Yank O'Brien when I was a kid. You remember the folks took Jake Martin's cattle to keep the summer of 1883, for one half the milk from six cows. It was my job to herd them until that cattle outfit drove 2,000 head of Long Horn cattle overland from Texas, and spread Texas fever wherever they went. Everyone lost their cattle, and that included Jake's, and our only cow.

"Mother raised a few vegetables and Dad a little corn, but our pioneering days really started from there. You and I had to get out and take jobs wherever and whenever we could get them, and take whatever was offered us, which was very little, and sometimes nothing at all.

Those were the "Good old days" when there were no unions, and kids were cheaper than horses.

"That fall, Dad sent me to work for Yank O'Brien on the Indian Reservation near Rosebud Agency. I was to get five dollars a month, my board and clothes. The clothes consisted of one red shirt -- much too large; One pair of pants, made for an under-sized man; one pair of boots (over sized); no socks; no underwear. Government issue --and that's the outfit I had to go through one of the worst winters in years, according to squaw-men and Indians.

"I had plenty to eat -- such as it was, and cooked by a squaw -- fresh beef, dirty navy beans, baking powder biscuits, glucose molasses and coffee, and -- of course -- light brown sugar and salt -- mostly government issue. The food and the exercise I got sawing and splitting wood, and doing chores, kept my blood circulating.

It was at night that I suffered most -- my bed was on the kitchen floor -- three old torn and filthy quilts, one on the floor and the other two for covers; no pillows; usually I used my coat for a pillow -- an old one that O'Brien had discarded. On extra cold nights, I used the coat as an extra cover. I slept in my clothes to keep from freezing, for the mud daubing was out from between the logs in places. Sometimes I'd watch the coyotes through those holes, prowling and snooping around the yard. It was not far from the stock-yards where the Indians butchered their government issued cattle, and the hard, cold winter drove the coyotes in and made them bold.

"About the middle of January, I froze my feet so badly I couldn't get my boots on, so O'Brien gave me a couple of gunny sacks to wrap my feet in. I found a piece of an old saddle blanket, and used part of that for socks. So I could still hobble around and do chores and saw wood.

"During a mild spell, O'Brien decided to go down to the railroad for a load of freight, and took me along to drive a team. When we got just north of our house, O'Brien stopped his team and said to me,

"You tie that team behind my wagon, and you can go home from here".

There were seven or eight inches of snow on the prairie with a crust of ice on top. It would have been hard walking for any one, and especially for me with my frozen feet.

"As I started to walk away, I turned to look at the outfit, and saw the mean grin on O'Brien's face -- it amused him so much to see me trying to walk. But when I looked again toward home, I saw Dad coming, riding one horse and leading another. Mother had seen me get off the wagon and fool around with the team, so she notified Dad. You see, it was about three quarters of a mile from where I got off the wagon to the house. I had just begun to wonder if I could make it to the house when I saw Dad start out.

"Yes, poor people's kids were only slaves in those days. Only those whose folks were well enough off to keep their families at home, got by in good shape, though nobody had much money. Remembering those times, I guess, is what makes me have so much sympathy for poor people's children. What a difference between then and now!

"I remember, you didn't get enough for a hard week's work to buy a gingham dress -- that is, the goods, not ready made; There were none of those then. It had to be calico. It was cheaper -- if I remember right, it was five or six cents a yard.

"Well, it sounds fantastic, but it is true, every word of this.

Your brother,

Joe"

At times, a permit was granted a settler to cut wood in the canyon for sale at one dollar and fifty cents a load -- when cut in stove length. If the wood was needed at the fort, he was paid three dollars and fifty

cents a load. Frequently the settlers sold to David Stinard who in turn sold to the fort. John Jackson was one who often cut and sold wood in this way.

Mr. Jackson also freighted to Gordon and Chadron, material to be used in extending the railroad westward, while other settlers worked part time in actual construction of the road. Arthur Brown was one of these North Table settlers who worked on this project as well as being the main "well-man" of the community. Perhaps the latter occupation being largely for fellow homesteaders -- and probably as lacking in cash as himself -- was more likely to be in the form of "exchange" work than anything else.

In this category too was threshing and corn-shelling among neighbors. Men gathered to help one another in the outdoor part of the operation, while women folk collected to help with the cooking and serving of meals to the crews. In spite of the rush and bustle of such occasions, linked with working from daylight to dark all through the season, many hands helped to lighten the work, and the social side of the project tended to make it enjoyable as well as tiring.

Again J. D. Novak's paper furnishes a description of early threshing machines.

The machine had a straw carrier instead of a blower. This required four or five men to remove and stack the straw. There was no self-feeder; The machine was usually fed manually by three men -- two to cut the bands of the bundles and one to feed them into the separator. A box at the side of the separator held bushel baskets into which the grain poured through a spout. Each basket was dragged past a meter, tripping a lever that tallied the number of baskets.

power was furnished by horses. Six teams of horses or mules

were hitched to as many pole sweeps attached to a large cog-wheel, so pulling it in a circle. The power thus generated was transmitted to the machine by "tumbling" rods — enough rods connected together by jointed couplings, to reach from wheel to machine. Neighbors helping on the crew also furnished teams."

There was wild game — deer and antelope in the canyons, prairie chickens, grouse, an occasional wild turkey, fish in the streams, both jack-rabbits and cotton-tails.

Billy Bullis related how Yank O'Brien tracked a jack-rabbit in the snow, all one bitterly cold winter day. Finally, about sunset, he came within shooting distance of the animal and made the kill. Many miles from home, by that time, he came wearily plodding homeward in the winter moonlight with the jack hanging from his belt, its long ears trailing in the snow as he walked.

Women sewed for their families, raised gardens and poultry, lent a helping hand in the field if necessary, and were on call in case of sickness or accident, or to care for mother and babe at and following childbirth. They washed and mended for soldiers at the fort, or for bachelor neighbors. And they concocted delicious preserves, pie-fillings, jams and jellies from the wild fruits they gathered in the canyons and on the prairie. Some of these fruits are: plums, grapes, choke-cherries, Rocky-Mountain currants, buffalo berries and sand cherries. Most of these grew best in the canyons, but sand cherries seem to prefer a sunny hillside — and too often, one infested with poison oak or ivy. A sort of wild ground-cherry or husk tomato, also grow along road-sides and grassy banks. All are edible, and all have a tangy, wild flavor never found in cultivated fruits.

Chapter XIV

Work and Play

These unpredictable homesteaders had a remarkable sense of humor

combined with the grim practicality so necessary to frontier life. They usually managed to work a measure of fun, if not actual play, into the sternest realities.

Billy Bullis admired, almost to the point of envy, a fine yoke of oxen, owned by Ben Hobson. So it was with pleasure that he accepted an invitation to ride to Valentine with Ben, behind the beautiful creatures. But Ben was proud too, of his "driving team", and had taken excellent care of them, -- possibly too good. Feeling very gay, the oxen chose to have a run. The running gear of a wagon is not the most comfortable of vehicles, and when the playful animals had exhausted their surplus energy and decided it was time to be dignified, Billy breathed a sigh of heartfelt relief. Not so Ben! He unlimbered the whip, and the oxen ran the rest of the way to town, where they were glad to stand quietly until time for the return trip, which was made with great docility. His eyes twinkling mischievously, Billy remarked,

"That was as wild a ride as I ever cared to take."

A crew of half a dozen settlers working together to dig a basement for someone's new house-to-be observed the pay-wagon with its escort of Indian Police approaching along the Rosebud Trail. One of the group wondered aloud what would happen were they to "hold up" the pay-wagon with their long shovel handles -- not unlike gun barrels when viewed from a distance. There was -- way to find out, and the small band vanished behind the breastwork for the cortege to come along side. Then an ominous line of "gun-muzzles" suddenly appeared above a ridge of fresh earth a short distance away!

There was a sharp command, a shuffling of horses' feet, and then -- silence --(?) The fire-arms were withdrawn, and a prankster stole a cautious peek from his hiding place -- and drew back hastily. A solid

line of police, in close formation, rifles at the ready, faced the earth-work with the pay-wagon behind them. After what seemed an endless wait, another low command was heard, again the shuffle of hoofs and creak of saddle leather as the troopers returned to position, and the cavalcade clattered off up the trail. No one ever knew whether a scout had crept close enough to see what was behind the suspicious mound or not. The outlaws made themselves as small and inconspicuous as possible until sure their little joke would not back-fire.

In spite of restrictions on taking logs and wood from the canyons, the settlers occasionally helped themselves to what they needed for building and burning. Billy recalled several experiences encountered in that unlawful pursuit.

Billy and Virg Hobson -- a nephew of Ben's went with a wagon running gear for a load of logs at one time. The stripped gears bounced, rocked and rattled up and down the rough, rocky hills. Whether the horses became frightened or exasperated by the unruly behavior of the crazy device, they suddenly bolted down a steep ravine, hurling both men down in front of the wheels. A front wheel struck Virg's head and bounded into the air, clearing Billy altogether, and the contraption rolled over. Aside from a discolored, egg-size bump on the head, Virg was unhurt, and the two soon righted their conveyance and proceeded to collect their load.

On another excursion, Billy watched from the shelter of thick pine growth, as still another Table dweller drove up out of the canyon with his load, just as a patrol of soldiers rode into view at a little distance. The interloper did not wait to reach the trail, but whipped his team to a run, and took off across the prairie, leaving a trail of wood at every jump.

The delighted soldiers made a great pretense of pursuit, calling,

"Halt! Stop, thief!" and firing their pistols in the air. Finally, when the greater part of his load lay scattered along his route, and he still looked over his shoulder and swung the whip alternately, they literally tumbled from their saddles to roll on the ground in paroxysm of mirth.

More than once, the soldiers warned trespassers that a party of officers were coming that way, and to "Keep out of sight until they're gone." But it was necessary that a culprit be brought in now and then, to prove that the situation was under control.

So it happened that Billy and a neighbor were taken in once or twice. Billy told how the officer in charge questioned them with much severity, gave orders for the wagons to be unloaded and the teams fed and cared for and sternly bade our heroes to come inside. There he placed chairs for them and, grinning good-naturedly, asked,

"Where do you fellows live?"

On being told, he exclaimed,

"What! Up there on 'Poverty Flat? How do you keep from starving?"

They visited until luncheon was ready, when he took them into the mess-hall, where, Billy declared, they were treated to a "h--- of a fine feed!"

Then they were told firmly, but not unkindly, to

"Go on home now, and stay out of the canyon! It will go harder with you if you are found there again."

They left the mess-hall to find their teams hitched to the empty wagons and ready to travel. Whereupon the subdued(?) pair again returned to the canyon, hid out until four o'clock, when the patrol returned to the fort for the night. Then they proceeded to cut what trees they wanted and reload, an operation that took, now, into the wee small hours.

If the same officer was in charge when they were brought in again, he "failed to recognize" them. So his threat of dealing harshly with them was never fulfilled.

Tall, slim Bill Ryschen -- a son of John's -- had worked for John Britt one summer. Bill and his employer plotted together to play a joke on unsuspecting, fun-loving Billy. So it was that Bill approached Billy with the suggestion that the two of them pay a visit to John's melon patch on a given evening.

"John has some beauties this year!"

Irrepressible Billy readily fell in with the scheme, and the incongruous pair -- tall, lanky Bill and short, roly-poly Billy -- set out with the greatest secrecy(?) for the melon patch.

In the very middle of the patch, as Billy reached for a choice melon, there was a rustling in the vines near him. Bill hissed,

"Run! Here he comes!" and promptly vanished.

"Gotcha!" grunted a deep voice, and a hand stretched toward Billy's collar. Billy ran as fast as his short legs would carry him, and big John Britt -- who could have overtaken him in two strides -- elected to stay that far behind. He thudded a huge club down beside the fleeing Billy, growling maliciously,

"Run, you little devil, run!" at intervals. The little devil ran -- or flew -- until, reaching the line fence, he dived and tumbled through, like a great tumble weed -- while his tormentor writhed on the grass and shouted with laughter.

The next day, John's light wagon drove up to Billy's door, and he and Cora were presented with a half dozen fine melons.

Billy served on the election board at Harmony School House for years, as did O. D. Hahn, and it did seem strange that the lot fell, almost invariably to Billy to go to the door -- from which the nearest neighbor was three quarters of a mile distant -- and startle the birds and ground squirrels with his --

"Hear ye! Hear ye! these polls are now open!"

Conclusion

Cora lived to cradle all three of her grandchildren -- Rudolph's son and daughters -- in her arms. The Valentine Newspaper for October 7, 1937, carried this announcement:

"Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Bullis celebrate fifty years of happy wedded life.

"Fifty years ago yesterday, on October 6, 1887, William F. Bullis of Valentine, Nebraska, and Cora E. Myers of Hampton, Iowa, were married at the home of the groom's parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Bullis, with Rev. Holsclaw, circuit minister, officiating.

"On October 6th, 1937, a family dinner was held at W. F. Bullis' home, a few miles northwest of Valentine, to celebrate fifty years of happy, wedded life.

"Those present at the dinner were: their only son and family, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Bullis and children, Cora Margaret and Robert William of Harmony, Nebraska; brother, Charles H. Bullis of Valentine; brother, John W. Bullis and wife of Hardin, Montana; niece, Mrs. W. R. Bruggeman, husband and son, Weldon, of O'Neill, Nebraska; Mr. and Mrs. Carl Klug of Valentine, Nebraska." (Billy's sister, Mrs. Nellie Bothe, of St. Louis, was unable to attend.)

"The bride and groom were the recipients of gifts and greeting cards from numerous relatives and friends, and among them was the following poem from and written by Etta M. Kellogg:

'Can this be true, your wedding day
Was fifty years since then?
How well do I remember it,
The how and where and when!
Fifty years! oh how time flies.
Now we have older grown;

And you are both alive and well,
And neither left alone.
I often think of the good times
We had in those old days
When all we wanted was our friends,
And not pretentious ways.
We've pioneered together, friends,
We've neighbored a long time.
I wish so much I could be there,
And not wish it in rhyme.
But one can't always do those things
That we would like to do --
And so a greeting card I'll send
With pleasant thoughts of you.
And may you live a long time yet,
Enjoy life all you can,
Be ready when your time shall come,
And life's long race is run.'

"In the evening, a large number of friends and neighbors filled the house to overflowing in a surprise gathering to congratulate these pioneer folk.

"Mr. and Mrs. Bullis want to express their appreciation for this expression of friendship, and also for the lovely gifts left by the visitors."

But Cora had been failing in health for several years. Early in 1939, she took suddenly to her bed, and we knew the end was near.

The final night of her life, as Billy sat beside her, scarce able to conceal his grief, she fondled his hand, and whispered the words with which she must often have encouraged him in trying early days:

"We always get along all right, Will."

A few days later, she was laid to rest, a victim of the dread cancer.

About eight years later, Billy suffered the first of a series of strokes --each taking added toll of his strength and spirit. The vocal cords were affected from the start, making speech extremely difficult, and, at times, impossible.

Finally, with the right side helpless, he was obliged to sit day after day, for long months, in Cora's old rocker beside the window, where he could look out and see a portion of what was going on out doors.

The last weary weeks, he repeated over and over, in his difficult, halting words,

"Why can't -- I go -- where she is?"

On May 27th, 1949, the last severe stroke sent him into coma. He roused only once -- the morning of Memorial Day -- and smiled, his old sunny smile when told of the friends who had called in while he slept. He extended his one well hand to each, in turn, of the little group at his bed-side, and again fell asleep.

Possibly the knowledge that the Angel of Death hovered near, lent added significance to the pure clarion quality of a meadow-lark's whistles as he made a complete circuit of the house outside that day. His final clear, sweet call came from the vine over the window beside Billy's bed. Then he was gone.

Not long after, the harsh, labored breathing slowed -- and stopped. Billy's prayer was answered. He had gone to be with his beloved Cora. We laid him at her side, and in the fall of 1907, Rudolph succumbed to a coronary attack and joined his parents in quiet, sunny Richland Cemetery.

And so the brave marching column passed in panoramic review, across the prairie toward the sunset.

The painted, be-feathered Indian brave: the Chief and medicine man;

the squaw with a drowsy papoose, shawl bound to her straight, strong back; the horse drawn travois.

Close behind march the missionaries -- the courageous Black-robe and the dedicated circuit rider; the dusty milling herds of Long-Horn cattle and their convoy of trail weary riders! The pulse-quickenning blue lines of marching men and mounted cavalry, with Old Glory floating above.

Following these come the long trains of yoked oxen with their equally long lines of trail-wagons -- the freighters. The mule teams with their whip-cracking, "mule-skinner" drivers of railroad construction are interspersed with the lumbering prairie-schooners.

As the long line fades away over the misty horizon, we are conscious of a yearning loneliness, a renewed determination to uphold the standard they raised, of Faith in God, honesty of purpose and courage. We silently close ranks and fall into step, and so bring up the rear guard of the fast receding column.

